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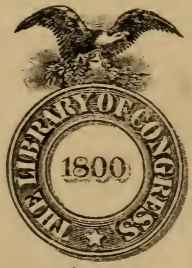

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Book W382

WHO ARE THE HAPPY?

OR,

PIETY THE ONLY FOUNDATION

OF

TRUE AND SUBSTANTIAL JOY.

BY REV. J. B. WATERBURY, D. D.

AUTHOR OF "ADVICE TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN," ETC.

"Rejoice in the Lord always."

AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,

150 NASSAU-STREET, NEW YORK.

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Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1851, by JARED B. WATERBURY, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of the State of New York.

Right of publishing transferred to the American Tract Society.

By Exchange,
Army and Navy Club
May 27, 1920

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PREFACE.

In this small volume an attempt is made to answer the question, "Who are the happy?" Many who are ignorant of the nature of true religion, who have never personally experienced its joys or its consolations, entertain the idea that it wars against their felicity. Indeed, some go so far as to assert that religion actually makes its votaries gloomy.

To repel this charge is the design of the first part of this treatise. If the reader have indulged such false and absurd notions, the perusal of these pages, it is hoped, will convince him of his error, and disclose to him the fact that piety is the only foundation of true and substantial joy.

Another part of the work is adapted more especially to a class of young professors of religion, who, in the present day, are peculiarly exposed to be drawn aside from the path of Christian duty by temptations addressed to their cupidity, their curiosity, and their love of excitement. If the writer shall have succeeded in warning such against the evils which threaten, or in fortifying them under

the actual assault, it will afford him the most heartfelt satisfaction.

An eminent minister once said, that "some persons have just religion enough to make them miserable." The object of this treatise, on the contrary, is to urge its readers to seek for those attainments in piety which shall be not only a solace under the trials of life, but which shall make their felicity sure, and place it on a foundation which can never be disturbed. J. B. W.

WHO ARE THE HAPPY?

CHAPTER I.

PIETY VINDICATED FROM THE CHARGE OF GLOOM.

"RELIGION makes men gloomy," says the thoughtless votary of the world. This allegation, if true, would be at least a plausible ground of prejudice against true piety; but it is made, as we shall see, without proper discrimination respecting its nature and influence.

He who brings this charge, judges merely from the serious expression of countenance which many professors of religion wear, and from the voluntary relinquishments of the gayeties of life which is observed to take place when they unite with the church of God. No estimation is made of the grand equivalent which piety gives for the renunciation of such vanities. Men look *only* at the cross. They take their views from the self-denial and the labors which he who bears it is called upon to meet. They have no standard by which to judge but their own experience, or rather, they

seem not to adopt any other; and finding their own joy, and, we may add, their only joy, to be inseparable from the pleasures and the honors of the world, they conclude, that he who for the sake of religion voluntarily foregoes them, must of necessity be condemned to a life of despondency and gloom.

But has it never occurred to those who bring this charge, that since they have not themselves made a practical experiment of the influence of piety, they are not properly qualified judges in the case? By the laws of God we are permitted to seek the highest amount of true and permanent felicity of which our nature is susceptible. Does this true and enduring happiness lie in the path of the pleasurist and the worldling? Then would the Christian be unwise for travelling out of it. He would be warranted, it might almost be said, in retracing his steps—in hastening away from a region where, according to the supposition, no sunlight falls upon his path, nor fragrant flower blooms to enliven it; but where every step is planted with thorns to pierce his feet as he explores his melancholy way through the world.

While such is the picture of a life of piety which fills the imagination of the gay world, their *own* path, they would have us understand, is one perpetual series of delights. It is implied in their

allegation, that no shadows fall around their paradise, nor a thorn obtrudes from that bed of roses on which they profess to recline. We shall not stop here to settle the question how far these scenes are a mere fancy sketch, nor at present disallow the claim to happiness which the pleasurist and worldling prefer. If they can, in the sincerity of their souls, affirm that these pleasures make them as happy as they desire to be, we shall not just now put any questions, nor make any appeals with a view to overshadow so agreeable a prospect.

The aim of the writer is rather to vindicate piety from an unjust aspersion, namely, that she robes her followers in gloom and sadness. That she makes them *serious*, we do not deny; but there is a wide difference between sobriety and melancholy. Sobriety is not opposed to cheerfulness, though it *is* to levity. Cheerfulness abounds everywhere in the works of God, but levity nowhere, except in the bosom and on the countenance of the thoughtless; and *there*, it is not the legitimate expression of God's image, but the evidence and the effervescence of sin. The lark is cheerful, as it mounts from its grassy nest, and singing soars away to the heavens. Cheerful also is the summer morning, revealing its glad scenery, as the rising sun gilds one feature after another of the landscape. Nature in all this has a lesson for man. She seems to teach him

that piety, in inculcating cheerfulness while she rebukes levity, responds to her own emphatic instructions.

They mistake, depend upon it, who interpret a serious face as the index of a heavy heart. It is excessive mirth that leaves the heart sad; since, in this latter case, the depression which invariably succeeds, is but the repayment which nature demands for violence done to her moral powers. We might enlarge on this point, and show that the perpetual draft which the pleasurist makes on the excitability of the physical constitution is directly adverse to happiness, if not destructive of health; and, on the other hand, we could easily make it appear that the serenity and composure of the Christian are in unison with the physical improvement as well as the moral condition of man. It might in this way be proved, that upon striking the balance of mere physical happiness between the serious Christian and the gay, unthinking child of levity, there would be a decided advantage in favor of the former.

Thus it appears that piety is not to be blamed for making her friends and followers serious, if thereby she make them happier. Let her not again be accused of making them gloomy. *Religion* make the soul gloomy! There is nothing but this in the wide universe which can really dispel its gloom.

If the heart be heavy and sad from the burden of temporal affliction, or from the pressure of conscious guilt, where can it find a remedy but in religion? You may take that burdened heart to the haunts of pleasure, and try to enliven it by sallies of wit, by the fascinations of beauty, or by the excitement of the revel. Vain will be your attempt. You are not allaying, you are only aggravating the disorder. There is but one influence which can effectually reach and relieve that heart, or drive from that anxious countenance its look of deep despondency. Religion can do it. It is her province alone to medicate the wounds of our disordered nature, and to send the glow of spiritual health through the soul. And when she comes to perform her work of love and mercy, she first, like her great Author, enters the polluted temple of the heart, and with a scourge drives out the intruder, and then consecrates it by her presence and illuminates it by her own heavenly smile.

Something, it is true, must be allowed for the varying temperaments upon which piety exerts its influence. The constitutionally lethargic man may not exhibit his piety in so alluring a light as one who by nature possesses a mirthful and elastic mind. But even in the former, a close observer will discover an attractive gleam which the Sun of righteousness has flung upon the native dulness of

the character; while in the latter, the excessive buoyancy is chastened into a reasonable and happy flow of spirits. But in *all*, the influence of piety is to spread cheerfulness over the soul; and by giving it the hopes and prospects of heaven, to introduce into it some of its anticipated joys.

CHAPTER II.

PIETY GIVES MORE JOYS THAN IT TAKES AWAY

Not to enlarge on the unreasonableness of expecting that in every case piety will so alter the natural disposition as to make the melancholy invariably cheerful, and reduce the diversified temperaments of men to one uniform tone, we may now consider another point connected with the charge that "religion makes its possessors gloomy," namely, that it requires them to forsake *the pleasures and gayeties of the world.*

By these pleasures is meant the ordinary worldly amusements which, with almost common consent, Christians have felt it their duty to relinquish. Some professors whose belief and practice are not intended to be very strict, have, we know, mingled unscrupulously in such scenes, and partaken of such pleasures. But we are now speaking of the truly pious, of those whose religion not only forbids, but powerfully *dissuades* from their indulgence. In this latter case, the relinquishment is not a *forced* but a *voluntary* act. It is not so much the coercion of stern duty as the sweet constraint of an honest, heart-felt preference of better things. This is placing the subject in its true light; and in this way

we maintain that piety gives more joys than it takes away.

It is not the intention of the writer to assert, that there is no felicity whatever in the pleasures which a gay and thoughtless world have planned and are pursuing; for if there were none, why should they be sought, and why are they continued? The aim of all is to secure in some form that happiness which the soul of man naturally craves. It is with the hope of satisfying this desire of the heart, that the invention is tasked to furnish a sufficient variety of social and animal gratifications whereby the mind may be excited and its depressing thoughts and anxieties driven away. In part the plan is successful. There is a certain amount of pleasure experienced in the anticipation and enjoyment of these things, although the most eager votary, it is probable, would confess that there is not so much real felicity as the inexperienced generally imagine. But in this case the heart has never tasted purer and more soul-satisfying delights. The round of social festivity and amusement is the only circle in which it has revolved; and these artificial pleasures are the only or the principal ones which it has been taught to covet and appropriate.

Now, how impossible, that one schooled only in these entertainments should be able to form a cor-

rect judgment of the pleasures of true piety, since the latter have not only never been enjoyed, but are of a nature so different from those which have been alluded to. It is as if you were to ask a native of the frozen zone, who had never been out of sight of the eternal snows which mantle those repulsive regions, for an opinion of the warmer climes where nature is so lavish of her charms. He might expatiate on the attractions of his own home, and talk of its superiority to all other scenes; and he might recoil at the idea of a transfer to a more genial region; but surely, if his foot never trod the flowery path of the tropics, he would be a very inadequate judge of the bright suns and fragrant beauties which their inhabitants experience.

Without denying to the pleasurist some of the felicity which he claims—alas, how inadequate!—we ask him to correct his judgment as to the happiness of the pious; no longer to fling upon religion the unjust charge that she is the cause of gloom, nor to suppose that, because she calls us from the region which he occupies to one more salubrious and cheering, she thereby cuts us off from the felicities of life.

But suppose even that piety abridged its disciples of every earthly pleasure, and gave them only a cup of suffering, still it might with reason be maintained, that in view of her eternal rewards, the

disciple would be infinitely the gainer. Such *was*, in a great degree, the case with the primitive Christians. But no gloom or despondency hung around their brows. One of them could exclaim, "I glory in infirmity." In view of heavy afflictions he could say, "I do rejoice, yea, and *will* rejoice." The point before us is, that piety gives more joys and purer, than she takes away. We hope in the course of our remarks this will appear; and while it may be our duty to expose the unworthy compromise with the world which some professors of religion are attempting to make, we shall aim to show that there is nothing in piety to curtail our true felicity; but, on the contrary, that she bestows a glorious equivalent for all the self-denials which she lays upon her disciples. Too often is this feature of our religion overlooked, and hence the incorrect judgment which is sometimes formed of its influence upon the happiness of man.

Religion is viewed by the unreflecting son and daughter of pleasure, as a stern and forbidding monster, who wears an iron visage, and holds in his hand a rod of anger; who comes to wither every rational enjoyment, and to condemn the heart to a state of isolated misery. How unworthy are such impressions of that system of mercy which God has devised to heal the sorrows and to cleanse the pollution of the soul. But let the heart once feel

the power of divine grace, and this imaginary monster is quickly transformed into a real seraph, yes, a celestial visitant robed in purity, and dignified with more than angel majesty. Her smile is the sunshine of the soul. Her voice is the music of heaven. She comes not to abridge, but to enlarge the sphere of human felicity. For the joys she interdicts she tenders others a thousand-fold more pure and elevating. Communion with her makes the heart sick of all inferior beauty. It has henceforth lost in a great measure its relish for the low and transient delights of the sensual and the gay. After having tasted of so pure a fountain, why, indeed, should it turn back to quaff the muddy and turbulent streams of earth? Why, after a glimpse of celestial glories, should it be interested in the artificial and unsatisfying round of this world's amusements?

No; piety takes nothing away that is worth retaining, nor does she withhold what is desirable and necessary. She allows every pleasure that is consistent with the good of our immortal nature; with her self-denials, even with the cross which she imposes, she connects a felicity which her sincere and faithful followers alone can understand and appreciate. "Her ways," says Solomon, "are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Deny this who may, *they* know it to be true who have

walked in her ways and gathered along their bright path the spiritual joys which she has furnished to the pilgrim.

"The joys that fade are not for me;
I seek immortal joys above:
There, glory without end shall be
The bright reward of faith and love."

CHAPTER III.

RELIGION ADAPTED TO THE SOUL'S DESIRES.

MAN may be said to possess four classes of desires, comprehended under the terms, animal, social, intellectual, and moral.

The animal desires he has in common with the brute creation. These may be satisfied independent of religion; but they are to be under her control, or they become inordinate and therefore sinful. Indulged beyond the boundaries which she has fixed, they are the occasion of guilt and misery. Hence, religion is all-important to restrain and guide these passions, so that they may not consume their victim by the intensity of their flame.

The social desires can be gratified without religion; but never, as it appears to the writer, can they, without its influence, be the source of all that happiness which they were designed to afford. There is much to mar the communion even of kindred minds where true piety is not the cementing bond. How often does envy prove the cause of coldness and alienation; and how small a circumstance will at times imbitter and interrupt the intercourse which had been commenced under high anticipations of permanent friendship. Piety is a check to these intervening barriers, and is ever ready not only to

sweeten the fellowship of kindred minds, but to counteract the causes of dissatisfaction and alienation. In her train comes charity, foremost of the graces, who has a smile for every heart, and a tear for every fault, and a look of generous forgiveness even when her laws have been violated. Besides, religion furnishes those pure, ennobling topics which awaken kindred feelings, and which become additional ligatures to bind in closest affinity the souls of the pious.

The pleasures also of the intellect may be enjoyed without piety. In the varied field of investigation which God has spread out to man, every taste may be indulged, and every faculty of the mind employed and strengthened. Philosophy we know has walked abroad over this scene of wonders, and culled a thousand gems to adorn and to dignify the mind of man. Poetry has explored every vale, ascended every mountain height, winged her flight to the visible heavens, plunged into ocean's bed, penetrated nature's solitudes, left no spot unvisited, in order to string her lyre with sweet chords that should thrill on the soul's deep feelings. But who does not see, that if religion be excluded from all connection with such pleasures and pursuits, they must lose much of the relish which they would otherwise possess? The intellect is too closely related to the moral powers to operate with its full

force, and to communicate by its exercise the highest good, while that relation is *unacknowledged*. If, as Dr. Young observes, "an undevout astronomer is mad," surely an atheist poet, or one whose muse never lifts her eye beyond earth's narrow bounds, is no less so. But piety has spread wide her treasures for the inquisitive mind; and he who refuses to examine them, must lose a rich harvest of intellectual pleasure.

There is a fourth class of desires which we call moral, or perhaps they may more properly be termed *immortal* desires. Now we ask, What provision is made for their gratification?

The world has aliment for the animal desires; all nature is ransacked to administer to their indulgence. Even the laws of God are trampled upon in order to "sow to the flesh." The pampered appetite, like a spoiled child, is asked what new variety can now be furnished to suit its capricious longings.

The world has also cultivated the social affections, and made a liberal provision for *their* gratification. What ceaseless rounds of amusement! What crowded assemblies! What exciting collision of wit and repartee! How has the human invention been tasked to produce new forms of social intercourse, by which men of varying tastes may mingle with some hope of reciprocal pleasure!

Nor have men been neglectful of the intellect

In every department of taste and of learning, multitudes are found whose pleasures rise above those just named; for we hold that next to the moral affections, the improvement of the intellect is the purest source of human felicity.

But one class of desires still remains—the *moral* or *immortal desires;* and we again ask, Has the world made any provision for them? No man but an atheist will deny to us the possession of such desires; nor can any with reason deny that they are the most important, if not the most importunate of our wants. The highest glory of man is not that he is an animal, and therefore his highest pleasure cannot lie in the gratification of the senses. Nor is it his highest dignity that he is a social being, for even the brute creation are, in a sense, assimilated to him in this respect; nor even that he has an intellect capable of enjoying the pursuits of science. No, his highest dignity and glory consist in his *moral* nature; and his most important wants are those which respect immortality. And yet it is a melancholy fact, that no provision is made by the world for this class of desires; but, on the contrary, every expedient is adopted to thwart and to suppress them. Here is certainly a great deficiency. One part of our nature, and that confessedly the most important, is, in the general provision of the world for human happiness, entirely

overlooked and neglected. No wonder man is not happy in the indulgence of his passions, that even social bliss meets not his large desires, and intellectual pursuits still leave him craving after something else. It is the voice of nature, complaining that her noblest aspirations are unheeded; and taking retribution for the neglect by withholding that satisfaction which the sinner is striving in vain to secure. Ye men of the world, ye sons and daughters of pleasure, look at this deficiency in your arrangements, and know that until it is supplied you cannot be at peace. Now the Christian has this advantage over you, that while piety permits him to enjoy all the pleasures of sense that are lawful, and social felicity, and intellectual pursuits, and enhances even these sources of good to man, she also gives him the bread of life for the soul. The immortal desires more than all others she meets with the requisite aliment. Is this no advantage; and are these joys of the spirit no increase in the general average of human felicity? Ah, in the language of Cowper, Christians can say,

"From thee is all that soothes the life of man;
His high endeavor, and his glad success,
His strength to suffer, and his will to serve.
But O, thou bounteous Giver of all good,
Thou art of all thy gifts thyself the crown!
Give what thou canst, without thee we are poor;
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away."

CHAPTER IV.

THE JOY OF TRUE PIETY.

ENOUGH has been said, we trust, to rescue true piety from the aspersion so often cast upon it, that it produces gloom and despondency. We hope that none of our readers will again indulge such a thought; but if they discover in the countenance or conduct of its professors any thing of this nature, they will refer it to the influence of something else besides piety. It may be the individual temperament, which by nature sad, is gradually assuming, under the influence of religion, a more cheerful tone; or it may arise from some passing cloud which has temporarily overshadowed the believer's mind; or, what is not uncommon, it may be a pensive and sorrowful feeling in view of the folly and madness of the careless, unthinking sinner. Impenitent reader, the gloom which you charge upon religion is often the outward sign of compassion for your soul. Interpret that look aright. Ascribe it not to piety, except as she teaches her followers to pity the lost.

We shall attempt in the subsequent pages to lay open THE SOURCES OF JOY AND FELICITY which the believer possesses, and endeavor to show, that if a Christian is not happy, it is from no deficiency in the

provision, nor in the means of obtaining it. We shall take as our motto the exhortation of the apostle, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice." Here we are explicitly directed to be cheerful, happy, yea, even joyful. We are required to exhibit our religion under a pleasing aspect, to wear a smile even when others would weep, and to sing our song of triumph when others would sink in despair. Is piety, then, at war with nature? O no, she only sustains nature under the burdens which our apostate state has laid upon it. Religion forbids not the heart to melt for sorrows felt or witnessed. The tears that dropped into the grave of Lazarus affirm this. But the sympathies of the *man* only set off to the more advantage the moral support of the *Christian;* and while nature is dissolved in grief, piety is near to wipe the falling tear, and throw around the soul her all-supporting arms. There is no stoicism in religion. But her joy is calm, not boisterous; and her sympathies deep in proportion to the real amount of suffering experienced or anticipated.

Nevertheless, it is the duty of all true Christians to evince to the world that their religion has taken off from the soul the garments of mourning, and clothed it in the spirit of gladness. How little of this rejoicing has been heard in the tabernacles of the righteous. How few Christians have felt that

the apostle's exhortation comes to them with any thing like an imperative obligation personally to rejoice. Hence it is not surprising that the notion has obtained among the irreligious that Christians are gloomy; and now, if we would wipe off from piety this aspersion, we must put on a new aspect, and give vent to our religious feelings in songs of praise and thanksgiving. But mark, Christian reader, we are not in favor of a forced or artificial joy. If our joy is in God, and is the natural efflux of pious emotion, it will then give a right impression, and be admitted to come from a divine source.

It appears evident that piety, to have its full effect upon the world, must come forth to the eyes of men with more of its *joyous* spirit. By this we do not mean that it must relax one iota of its strictness, nor subtract one particle from the weight of that cross which it imposes. It is not our aim to exchange its cheerfulness for levity, nor its abstinence from worldly gayeties for a participation in them. Its joy then would not surely be in God. But we intend to urge the importance of having the soul so imbued with the love of God and man, so settled in its own confidence of salvation, so full of heavenly hopes and anticipations, so dead to the world and so independent of its delights, that it shall wear something of a celestial air, and impress men with both the reality and the purity of

its joy. In our day it seems, alas, as if this bright feature was but seldom fully developed. Where is to be found the happy Christian? Where is the soul whose devotions partake more of the rapturous than the complaining spirit? On *whose* face now beams the smile of gladness? Who lives so near to heaven's bright regions as to have his features gilded with its reflected glories? Surely religion is designed, and has the power thus to irradiate every soul on whom her influence falls. She comes from heaven, the region of felicity, to conduct the soul out of these "dismal deeps and dangerous snares," to fill it with joy unspeakable, and to guide it where no sorrows can ever be experienced. Who then should wear a brighter countenance than the Christian? Who has a right to sing such exulting strains, or to indulge in such glorious anticipations? With all due allowance for the varying temperaments of the pious, we still think that there is less Christian joy than the Bible warrants and even commands.

Look at the example of the apostle Paul, who, though pressed with more care and encompassed with more infirmities than any of his pious colleagues, exhibited this joyous spirit throughout his whole Christian course. I will challenge the gayest child of vanity to a comparison with him. View him when and where you will, he is the same buoy-

ant and happy saint, whose deep, ardent piety, like a talisman, doubles every joy, and converts even the occasions of sorrow into seasons of spiritual triumph. "Rejoicing in tribulation" was one of his mottos. What says earth's votary to this? The worldling can be happy when all goes well with him. He can exult amid the prosperities of life; but cast him with the apostle into Philippi's dungeon, or place him at Nero's bloody tribunal, and see if his joy will hold out there

Piety has other signal triumphs to name. We may, even in our day, point to a Legh Richmond, whose soul for the most part sent forth notes "cheerful as the bird of morning;" or to Hannah More, whose natural gayety of temper, sanctified by eminent piety, diffused around her a most attractive charm. Her example, were there no other, should wipe away for ever two very unjust charges sometimes brought against piety, namely, that it influences only weak minds, and overshadows the soul with gloom and despondency

CHAPTER V.

PIOUS JOY ENJOINED IN THE SCRIPTURES.

As the writer is addressing principally professing Christians, it is proper to inquire of them if they have ever considered the numerous *calls and commands from Scripture* to the exercise of pious joy? It must have occurred to every reader of the Bible how often this duty is inculcated; and it must have rather puzzled him to find among all his Christian acquaintance so partial a compliance.

In its very name, the religion of the gospel is good tidings of great joy. All its promises and prospects are gladdening to the soul. Every feature is radiant with heaven's brightness. The highly figurative descriptions of it given us in scripture all represent its joyous tendency. It is a fountain opened for the way-worn and thirsty traveller, and mercy's angel seems to stand at its brink, crying, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." Nor is this fountain unsealed merely to *refresh* the soul, it is also designed as a *healing* stream. Judah and Jerusalem are invited to come and wash away their pollution in its purifying flood. How strongly speak these figures of the joyous character of the gospel Fully to appreciate them, we

must go pitch our tent with the Arab in the desert, whose parched lips have just touched the long-sought stream; or creep with the half-decayed leper to the pool of Bethesda, where his foul disorder can be healed.

It is called "the day-spring from on high," than which no symbol could be more lovely or cheering. It is termed the "light to them that sit in darkness;" it is the "opening of the prison doors to them that are bound." It is "life from the dead." It is "joy unspeakable and full of glory." How rich is the Scripture in imagery setting forth the gladdening influence of piety. It is natural, then, to look for this effect, wherever it is experienced; and it is no forced inference to say, that all these figures imply, if they do not enjoin, the exercise of pious joy.

I have alluded to Paul as a fine specimen of the uniformly cheerful saint. I will join with him one whose experience was not perhaps so uniform, but whose pious joys rose occasionally, if not constantly, quite as high. I mean the psalmist David. There may have been something in the temperament of David, on which religion acted with a peculiar and impressive gracefulness. Judging from the account given us of his early life, we should very naturally conclude this to be the case. How lovely is his deportment when first introduced to the notice, and

taken under the patronage of Saul. What strength of affection did he manifest towards Jonathan! He had evidently, too, a soul attuned to the contemplation of nature. He was trained amid her glorious works, and learned to sing, with a poet's exultation, of her beauties and her wonders. But all these traits, which nature had so amply supplied and adjusted, were sanctified by religion, and were wholly enlisted in her service. From such a one, I admit, we might expect a more than ordinary amount of Christian cheerfulness. If we judge his emotions by the devotional strains which he has indited, we shall say that he excels all others in the rapturous and even sublime joy which, for the most part, he evinces. "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof and be glad. O, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." "I will rejoice in thy salvation." Nor was he satisfied with expressing in such elevated strains his *own* gladness of heart, but he calls upon others to join in this delightful work. "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright." "Let them that love thy name be joyful in thee." "Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." And when he has enlisted the voice and tongue of Zion's children, he next invokes inanimate nature to unite in the general concert of praise. "Let the sea

roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together before the Lord."

It is true, a plaintive and sometimes even a deeply desponding tone is exhibited in the Psalms, but the general tenor is that of confidence and of joy. Even where, in some instances, the writer commences in a mournful strain, ere his song is ended the sentiment changes to one of heavenly rapture.

With respect to David it may then be said, he lived, for the most part, in a happy frame; and that his joy was derived from, and was connected with the love and service of God.

Other instances of a uniformly joyful frame might be gathered from scripture, and also from among Christians in modern times; but I would ask the reader to look at a few passages of the Bible setting forth the duty of manifesting a cheerful, happy temper, as the legitimate effect of true piety.

The Scriptures are so full of exhortations of this nature that I scarcely know where to select. In the book of Chronicles, Israel is commanded to "glory in God's holy name;" and it is added, "let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord." In Deuteronomy it is said, "Ye shall rejoice before

the Lord your God." Says the prophet Joel, "Ye children of Zion, rejoice in the Lord." Paul has numerous exhortations to rejoice. In closing his epistle to the Philippians he says, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice."

These examples and quotations make it plain that the truly pious are not only authorized to put on the air of gladness, but are required as the redeemed of the Lord to manifest this spirit before the world. Every thing in the visible universe calls the Christian to this duty. Nature, by audible and inaudible strains, should provoke us to the manifestation of our joy. The flower that has slept beneath the dews of the night lifts up its head and seems to smile as the sunbeam of morning falls upon it. The sky is bright and joyous after the dark cloud has rolled away, and countless voices come to us from earth and air, whose cheerful accents tell us that if their joy be transient it is nevertheless sincere. Now, shall the Christian, whose soul has wept sweeter tears than the dews of the night, and has been enlivened by a brighter beam than the morning ray, shall he refuse to look glad? Shall he from whose prospects the dark cloud of God's anger has passed away for ever, give no sign of joyfulness; nor, while listening with the ear of faith to the melodies of heaven, in

which he hopes soon to unite, begin the hallelujahs on this side of his eternal rest? Shall the power of God awaken in the natural world such strains of joy; and shall this great mercy be less influential in filling the soul which it has blessed with the praises of its God?

CHAPTER VI.

THE FOUNDATION OF PIOUS JOY.

EVERY effect has its cause; and this principle is as applicable to the emotions of the soul as to the phenomena of the material world. If there be exercised a pious joy, it must have some source or origin. The apostle Paul has referred it to the true and legitimate cause. He says, "Rejoice in the LORD." The foundation, then, of pious joy is GOD, the infinite source of all true felicity. The numerous passages of Scripture already cited, especially those from the psalmist, evince the same truth. "Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness."

Pious joy is not confined to the redeemed children of Adam, but is felt and manifested by all the holy. The good angels are no less exultant than the ransomed, who are associated with them in singing the hallelujahs of heaven. But the source of this gladness, both among angels and men, is the same. It is the great and glorious God.

When Adam was created, and placed a pure being in the garden of Eden, we may suppose that as one of his first acts would be holy praise, so one of his first emotions would be pious joy. But if we

imagine that his joy came simply or principally from the fragrant beauties which surrounded him, we are greatly mistaken. Such a conception would not be in harmony with the character of God his Creator, nor with the exalted and unsullied character of Adam. His outward circumstances enhanced, doubtless, his happiness; but this effect they had as media, through which to trace the wisdom and goodness of God. We should infer from the scripture account of our first parents, that while their occupation was to dress and to keep this earthly paradise, their purest and noblest satisfaction consisted in intimate communion with God. Earth was then but one form of heaven, adapted indeed to the compound nature of man, but varying not from heaven in the essentials of its happiness, nor obstructing as now a free and familiar intercourse with Jehovah. Hence, we find the Almighty conversing with Adam as one converses with his friend; giving out his commands, promising his favors, and affording the blissful light of his countenance. "In the cool of the day," by some palpable manifestation he made himself known to his new-created subjects, and filled their souls with "joy unspeakable." It was doubtless to this glad hour that our first parents daily looked with most delightful anticipations, and *in* it felt their purest rapture. But Eden was no longer bright or beau-

tiful when that hour became a season of dread, and the guilty pair shrunk from the well-known footsteps of their Creator. Their greatest happiness *before* their fall, was in God; and their keenest misery *after* it, was, that they had "forsaken the fountain of living waters." Milton has put into the mouth of our maternal progenitor a very beautiful and touching lamentation over her lost paradise. The poet, in this, has spoken the voice of nature; but it is, alas, the voice of fallen nature, which is prone to be more touched by a deprivation of the gift than by any deep sense of the forfeited favor of the great Giver.

Since that sad event which drove man away from his Maker, we have been striving to substitute some other foundation of felicity; but never can true and substantial joy revisit the soul, until that soul regains its primitive portion, and finds its all in GOD.

The remedial system which the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ presents, has in view this very object: the restoration of the divine favor, whereby a permanent foundation is laid for human felicity. It is true, this blessed gospel does not propose to replant literally another Eden, and to embower believers among its amaranthine shades; but it does what is infinitely better, it places under the soul the original foundation of its joy; and by

reclaiming it to God, gives it the promise and the prospect of a brighter paradise above. And now we may walk again with our Maker "in the cool of the day," in the evening hour of meditation, or at any time which the soul may choose, and feel as real, if not as exuberant a joy as glowed in the hearts of Eden's unfallen occupants. We may now cast our eyes over the Creator's works, which, if disrobed of primeval loveliness, are still his works, and retain the signature of his hand in all their outspread beauties and sublimities. We may survey these wonders, and rejoice in them as the manifest indications of his godhead. We are invited to come back from our unsatisfied wanderings, and to rebuild on the original foundation of all true joy and felicity. Ever since Adam was cast out of the consecrated garden, man has not known where to go for this pure and substantial joy. How many streams have been tasted in the hope of finding it; how many countries have been explored; what a variety of pleasures have been pursued! But man is driven from the presence of God. This is the true secret of all his cares and sorrows. This explains the failure of his ten thousand experiments. Until he gets back to the presence of his God he has no right to rejoice, and he has in fact no true foundation for joy. But Oh, what glad tidings are these that fall on the ear! Methinks I

hear again the renewed congratulations of the angel band, assuring us that "the second Adam, the Lord from heaven," has come to conduct us back to our forfeited paradise; or rather to reopen the celestial Eden, and acquire for us a title to its imperishable glories Now God will dwell again on earth, and the soul may find in him the broad foundation of peace and happiness. And who is this that turns aside the cherubic sword and allows us to pluck the immortal fruits, and breathe once more the atmosphere of heaven? To whom are we so deeply indebted for the restoration of our joy? Ah, reader, if you have never known this Friend of the helpless, this almighty Saviour, you cannot know what pure and perfect pleasure is. You have not yet touched the vital spring of human felicity. But if you know this Saviour, and feel him to be precious to your soul, you have found your way to the well-spring of life, and can "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."

"Dearer, far dearer to my heart,
Than all the joys that earth can give;
From fame, from health, from friends I'd part,
Beneath His countenance to live."

CHAPTER VII.

THE JOY OF BELIEVING IN GOD.

Since the joy of the Christian has its foundation n God, the reader's attention may very properly be directed to some particular aspects in which this position is illustrated.

The first which shall be noticed is a very simple one—*the habitual and practical conviction of the divine existence.* I am not disposed, in these pages, to enter into any formal argument against atheism, but would remark simply, that while the *avowed* atheist is rarely to be met with, there is, among many who style themselves Christians, a vast deal of *practical* atheism.

The effect, in this latter case, on the happiness of man, is very little less than where the disbelief of a God is openly avowed. If the soul is wholly absorbed from day to day, for a series of years, in the mere business or pleasures of the world, it is leading, so far, an atheistical life. The fact that no profession of this monstrous doctrine is made, abates but in a small degree the influence which the *practice* of it exerts over the moral affections. There is indeed *this* point of difference : in the one case the individual feels but little check upon an unrestrained indulgence of the evil passions, while

in the other there is the power of conscience strengthening its rebukes by a vague impression of future retribution.

Now we admit, that until the soul can have some reasonable hope that God is its friend and portion, the habitual conviction of the divine existence can hardly be supposed to produce pleasure, much less joy. If the individual is conscious that his course of conduct is such as God would not approve; or if his desires are such as he is unwilling to lay before the omniscient eye, it must be evident, that instead of finding in the idea of God's eternal existence any thing agreeable, it is the source of much disquiet and alarm. Hence it is said of such in the Scriptures, that "they desire not the knowledge of his ways."

But while the idea of God is shut out intentionally from the minds of those who may be termed practical atheists, whose attention is confined to the gifts, while it is impiously withdrawn from the Giver, the pious soul delights in the very thought of God, and finds in this grand fundamental fact a substantial foundation of joy.

The conception of God, inadequate as it must of course be, even where the Bible has taught it, and the Spirit has cleared the "mental ray," is nevertheless one so well adapted to the soul's nature and desires, that it produces a powerful augmentation

of its happiness. This, I repeat, is the case only where the soul has some reasonable hope that the great Creator has become reconciled to it through Jesus Christ. The truly pious, therefore, have, in the habitual conviction of the divine existence, a sublime and glorious conception lying before the mind at all times, and operating upon its powers to enlarge them, and upon its desires to purify and ennoble them. Here is an advantage in favor of piety which is not often contemplated. Other men may talk of their belief in God, but so long as they aim to keep this grand idea away from their thoughts, it does not exert even its natural effect to enlarge and ennoble the powers. The Christian is in the daily contemplation of this fact. The grand conception is operating perpetually, and must hence give dignity and compass to the soul's faculties, while at the same time the moral affections are awakened and purified.

Every pious man delights in the idea of the divine existence. It not only enlarges but *rejoices* his heart. There is the accompanying conviction that God is his portion, his father, and his friend. This filial spirit abates the overpowering impression which so great a truth would otherwise exert, and enables him to mingle holy love with reverential fear. It is with the good man an habitual, pervading impression. God is "in all his thoughts."

The universe is to him illuminated with the divine presence. He has lifted his contemplations above the region where they used to dwell, and finds himself searching for God in every event of life, and marking his footsteps in all the changes which take place in this mutable sphere. Who cannot see that such a thought must necessarily afford a ground of exultation to the Christian? Let any mind now buried amid earth's low cares and pleasures, making all its calculations and laying all its plans without a recognition of God, or even a thought of his presence and government—let this mind come fully and habitually under the belief of a God, and begin to acknowledge him in all its ways, what a calm confidence will at once overspread it, and how soon will it evince a dignity to which it was before a stranger. There is something sublime in the idea of an ever-present, all-pervading God. It gives the soul that holds it a stability which no vicissitudes of earth can undermine. It plants the feet upon a rock. It enables the devout man to sing and to rejoice even when the prospect is appalling. He goes forth, too, among the works of this great Creator, and holds converse with every thing which God has made Every such object has a tongue and a voice which ministers instruction to the soul. Where the poet sees only some fine combination in nature, *he* adds

to it the vital breathings of the present and glorious God. While the philosopher exults in the newly discovered analysis, the Christian says, "Here is the finger of God." Multitudes, "with brute, unconscious gaze," are dwelling only on the intrinsic value of nature's gifts: the contemplative Christian adds a new and moral charm by connecting them with that hand which "openeth to satisfy the desire of every living thing." Is there no advantage in all this? Has not the pious soul a greater and more sublime source of joy than those grovelling minds who, while they deny not the being of God in words, do practically eject him from their thoughts. Atheistical conduct may exist where an atheistical creed is not adopted; but to have a full perennial fountain of joy, we must have the habitual conviction that there is a God. that he is ever-present, and that he is our friend and portion

CHAPTER VIII.

PIOUS JOY CONNECTED WITH PROPER CONCEPTIONS OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER.

THE good man rejoices, not only in the existence of God, but in *his character* as revealed in the Bible. Taught by the Holy Spirit through the medium of divine truth, his views of the Creator, though inadequate, are nevertheless correct.

We may believe in a supreme Being, and yet so wide from the truth may be our views of his nature, attributes, and government, that the contemplation of him shall produce horror and dismay rather than pleasure. Such unworthy impressions of God are actually entertained in countries where the light of revelation is not enjoyed. The thought of God carries only terror to the soul, and his worshippers are employed in deprecating his anger rather than in supplicating his favor. The loveliest trait of the divine character—if it be not irreverent to institute a comparison—his beneficence, is unknown, and he is considered as more disposed to injure than to bless his creatures.

And even where men *may* know the true character of God—where the Bible and the Sabbath and the sanctuary exist—very incorrect and un-

worthy notions of him are entertained. Those "who obey not the gospel, know not God." With the means of informing themselves abundantly within their reach, they prefer to remain in ignorance; and all the impressions which they obtain of his character, are such as come rather by the force of circumstances than by any prayerful and diligent study of his word.

The impenitent sinner, even when contemplating God, takes but a partial view of his character. Finding that he has levelled his denunciations against sin, and made ready his arrow against the workers of iniquity, he is led to view him only as a God of vengeance, and like the heathen, to associate with him the idea of malignity rather than benevolence. Hence, he is surprised that a Christian can have any joy in the contemplation of the Deity; and hence also, he strives to shut out the thought of God from his own mind. But here is clearly a very partial and incorrect notion of the Creator.

It is true that God will punish the workers of iniquity who do not repent and trust for salvation in his Son Jesus Christ; but is this any objection to his character? Would you allege as an unworthy trait against a civil magistrate, that he caused the laws to be respected, and for their violation punished the delinquent? It might be shown that, on the principles of the strictest benevolence, it would

be necessary for God to do in this respect just as he has done. Now, what the unreflecting sinner calls severity in God, the Christian views as the essential and all-important attribute of justice; and so far from objecting to its existence or its exercise, he looks upon it as the pledge of security to the moral interests of the universe. He can and does rejoice in God as *holy* and *just*, as well as good.

The views entertained of the divine beneficence by those who are not taught of God, are often very incorrect and unscriptural. Some make it wholly indiscriminate, alleging that it covers all the sins of all mankind, and in its ultimate action makes no difference "between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." To exalt *this* trait, they merge *another* equally important, his justice. This is evidently a very distorted and erroneous view of the divine character. Some can see no goodness in God unless he heaps favors on themselves. The measure of his blessings to them is the rule by which they judge of the gracious acts of their Creator; not reflecting that according to the Bible, he may after all be giving them their good things only in this life.

How much more comprehensive, as well as correct and scriptural, are the views of the pious soul. His Bible teaches him that God is good, and that he doeth good, and that "his tender mercies are

over all his works." He views him as benevolent, and as exerting his benevolence to make his creatures happy, yet not at the sacrifice of his justice and his truth. He considers the divine Being as acting on a great and comprehensive plan, in which, though temporal favors are given to men with apparent disregard to their moral character, yet all things are working together for the good of the pious; while even temporal blessings are often so perverted and abused by the wicked, that they become at last the witnesses of God against them. To the eye of a Christian, God sits regent over all the universe, and conducts the affairs of his mighty empire with a view to promote his own glory. It is this enlarged conception which enables the Christian to exult in the fact, that "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Sovereignty is a glorious attribute of God. Wisdom to devise the best plans, and power omnipotent to secure their accomplishment, and this too without destroying the accountability of man, or lessening his dependence on divine aid, are the grand and mysterious features of that government instituted and administered by the Eternal One. Is there here no room for joy? Has the soul no solid basis for praises in all this? Have not these views a direct tendency to establish the heart in confidence, to make it feel that the temporary obstructions to the triumph of truth and virtue

will only, in the end, and under the jurisdiction of God, make that triumph the more complete and glorious?

To rejoice in God, we must view his character as it is revealed in his holy word—we must have affections in unison with it—we must feel that inward approbation and submission and love which result from the renewal of the Holy Ghost; and then, not only shall we entertain right views of God, but the conception will act on the soul with a cheering, as well as a sanctifying influence.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RELATION OF PIOUS JOY TO THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE.

The Bible teaches the doctrine of *a particular providence.* "Not a sparrow," says Jesus, "shall fall on the ground without your Father;" and "even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." "The steps of a good man," says another, "are ordered by the Lord." This doctrine is, by the pious man, not only believed, but practically recognized in all the business and events of life; and it is this *practical* recognition alone that constitutes it a foundation of joy.

How many are there who do not sympathize in the least with this view of divine providence. They are willing to install the great Creator on the universal throne, and pay him the homage due to a distant and comparatively uninterested monarch too lofty to stoop to the affairs of men, and too much absorbed in his vast empire above, to interfere in the concerns of this diminutive sphere. Hence, we hear so much of chance, of fortune, of second causes, and so little of the divine hand, in the vicissitudes of nations and of individuals.

But what say ye, who thus think and act, to the

view which our Saviour gives us? The bird that folds its wing and falls to the earth, or that is arrested by the archer's arrow and drops bleeding to the ground, is directed in its fall by the hand of God. Yea, even the hairs of our head, insignificant as they may singly seem, are still noticed and numbered by the Almighty. Not a step that we take, nor a purpose that we accomplish, do we take or accomplish independent of him. What say ye to this view of a divine providence? This is the view that brings God near; that acknowledges his hand in the minutest affairs of life, and yet derogates not from his dignity as the maker and mover of the spheres. He who lighted up the sun, formed the moth that bathes its beauteous wing in the bright sunbeam; and that insect existence as truly demonstrates the infinitude of his power, as does the great fountain of light in whose radiance it rejoices.

The pious mind embraces this scriptural doctrine of a particular providence, and finds it both consolatory and encouraging. In all that relates to the external world—its physical changes, and its great moral and political events—the good man is busy in interpreting the will of God. Where other men are prying into second causes, and noticing *their* influence alone, *he* traces the finger of Providence operating through these causes in the pro-

duction of the highest good. Here, his advantage must be conceded in having, above others, his heart fixed on the great First Cause, whose fiat is the law of the universe, and whose power, wisdom, and goodness, are pledges for the rectitude of his government. Let then the clouds rise ever so dark and disastrous; "let the sea roar, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof," he can sit calm amid the scene, and sing of Him who, though "clouds and darkness be round about him," makes "justice and judgment the habitation of his throne."

But it is in view more especially of his own private history that the Christian finds this idea of a particular providence so productive of joy. From his infancy onward he sees and acknowledges the hand of his heavenly Father. He turns back to the first page of his earthly existence, and loves to read a lesson of gratitude in the parents whose affectionate looks awakened the first infant smile. He marks a hand divine thrown around him during the reckless period of youth, and pointing out his path as he emerged from youth into manhood. Even disappointments which, at the time of their occurrence, were so hard to bear, in the retrospect he sees to have been ordained from a kind regard to his real good. How often is he constrained to sing, in the beautiful lines of Addison,

"When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise.

"Thy providence my life sustained,
And all my wants redressed,
When in the silent womb I lay,
And hung upon the breast.

"To all my weak complaints and cries,
Thy mercy lent an ear,
Ere yet my feeble thoughts had learned
To form themselves in prayer.

"When in the slippery paths of youth
With heedless steps I ran,
Thine arm unseen conveyed me safe,
And led me up to man."

It is a practical impression of this unseen hand moving in all that happens to the believer, administering the cup of joy and of affliction, and all for his ultimate good, that throws over the soul a quiet confidence, and enables it in "every situation therewith to be content." His heavenly Father is at the helm, and no adverse wind that blows, or threatening waves that rise, can excite a fear in his trustful heart. If the wisdom that looked to "the end from the beginning," that laid the plan of the universe in all its minute circumstances, as well as its grand results, is busied in shaping *his*

lot in life; and if the power that is omnipotent is also, under the guidance of eternal love, employed in carrying out these designs—if this be so, as he firmly believes, how calm and thankful, yea, even joyous, must be his feelings. Then must every blessing be viewed as from the hand of God; and even disappointment be interpreted as an inexplicable yet certain token of the divine favor, which is to be overruled for the greater good of the soul. Now who can deny that such a doctrine puts the language of praise as well as of prayer into the lips, and enables him who believes it to "rejoice in the Lord always?" If the father of a numerous family is known to be wise in all his domestic arrangements; exact in their accomplishment; blending patriarchal dignity with paternal love; ever seeking the good of his household; and contriving a thousand affectionate ways to win their confidence and increase their respect and affection; how certain that such a household will be pervaded by a lovely and joyous spirit. Even the discipline of that house will wear the aspect of tenderness, and every inmate will be watching for the returning smile upon the brow, as the signal for a renewal of their gladness. If domestic trials come, all will turn their confident expectations to the head. In his wisdom they have a pledge that every thing will be done which can be done; and in his affec-

tion an equally sure pledge that what *is* done will have a respect to *their* interests.

Now this but faintly images the confidence in God's providence which spreads such satisfaction and joy over the soul of a pious man. As one of a numerous family, he knows that while every incident is ordered and arranged by the great Head for the good of the whole, yet each individual's good is included in, and is conducive to the good of the whole. He will therefore be ever deciphering, among the vicissitudes of his journey, the tokens of divine favor which blend in with all that he enjoys and all that he suffers. In his passage to the eternal rest, not one inch will be too thorny, nor one moment too dark. No cup will be too bitter when he is convinced that his heavenly Father has given it to him to drink; but breasting himself against the flood of evils which he may be called to meet, or rather strengthened by divine grace cheerfully to bear what divine Providence has justly assigned, he will go on his way rejoicing in the full belief that all things will at last work together for his good.

CHAPTER X.

THE JOY OF SALVATION.

In the remarks already made, it has been implied, as the reader will perceive, that he who rejoices in God is one who is through divine mercy *reconciled to him*. In one word, he is in a state of salvation. This new relation which the soul sustains to its Creator and Sovereign is the grand source of its highest felicities; and the consciousness of this change, together with the exercises which grow out of it, affords the most heartfelt joy. This is the joy of salvation.

It is this great change, together with the effects of it on the heart and life, on the hopes and prospects, that distinguishes the truly pious from those who are unconverted. To know what this change is, and properly to appreciate its benign effects in the production of human happiness, it is necessary personally to experience it. "The natural man," says St. Paul, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God."

Let those then speak of the blessedness of this state who through divine grace have enjoyed it; and let none question the truth of their testimony, nor the sincerity of their professions.

The very term *salvation* implies subject matter for joy and praise. But the depth of the emotion must depend in some degree on the amount of evil from which the soul perceives itself to have been rescued. If a man is delivered from a state of mere ignorance, he would naturally rejoice in the change. Now, if the gospel simply revealed a clearer dispensation, and unfolded some new moral motives—the only view, alas, which many take—it would cause, in a mind anxious to acquire religious knowledge, a spring of fresh delight. But it will be seen that, in this case, nothing more is conceded to the gospel than an increase of moral light. The joy, therefore, if real, cannot be so deep as it will be according to another and more scriptural view which we present.

Suppose the individual, in addition to being in a state of ignorance, to be also in a state of guilt and condemnation. He mourns not only that he is in darkness, but that he is in the "bonds of iniquity." He finds within an evil heart of unbelief, a heart of stone, a deep-seated alienation from God, which, according to the principles of the divine government, renders him liable to everlasting death; nay, God has already actually passed upon him the sentence of condemnation. The individual, we say, has a conviction of all this, which mars every earthly pleasure, and fixes his thoughts intensely

on his doom. It is a conviction which saddens and depresses the soul, and incapacitates it for the enjoyment of those things which the world covets and esteems. Now, mark, this is not *religion*, but *a deep sense of the need* of it. The indiscriminate observer sometimes confounds this anterior state of anxiety with religion. It is, however, only conviction; and we do not pretend there is any joy in such a state of mind. But, as the sun shines the brighter when the dark cloud is broken, and the muttering thunders are dying away in the distance, so the soul that flies terror-struck from mount Sinai, and comes in view of Calvary, rejoices the more from the impressive contrast of its emotions.

It is at the point of transition that we wish to contemplate it; when it comes "out of darkness into God's marvellous light." In proportion to the depth of these convictions and the evils which they respect must be the joy of deliverance. But who can measure these emotions; or what mind, but that which has felt them, can understand the oppressive nature of these convictions? Various and striking are the emblems used in Scripture to denote this wretchedness from which the sinner by the gospel salvation is delivered. It is called a "horrible pit"—a "state of darkness." The soul is said to be "lost," to be under "condemnation;" a prisoner in

fetters; "dead in sin;" "sold under sin." Such are some of the scriptural representations of our old state, in which we are previous to the great change which brings the joy of salvation. Every true Christian has felt deeply and practically the truth of these representations. He has been bound under the burden of sin. No incarcerated victim ever felt more keenly the darkness and damps of his dungeon. No galley-slave ever sighed more oppressively under the weight of his chains. No wounded hart ever panted with keener anguish under the barbed shaft. It is in vain to attempt a sketch of the sinner's convictions, as he comes in full view of a violated law, an offended God, and an abused gospel. But deep as are these sorrows, they are the measure of that joy of salvation which succeeds.

Go with the redemption price in your hand, and unlock the cell of the emaciated captive. As you announce to him the liberty which he is permitted to enjoy, mark well the emotions of his soul. Unclasp his fetters, and lead him forth to breathe once more the air of heaven. Let him actually *feel* that he is liberated, and that the beauties of God's universe are once more his to contemplate and enjoy: is it possible to describe or even to conceive his joy? Or as Cowper, in an affecting strain of self-applying verse, represents himself the stricken deer, with arrow deep infixed, flying to the

shady covert, and there meeting with one who had himself been shot by the archers, and who gently drew out the dart and healed the wound; so take the poor wounded sinner, and go with him to the great Physician. See how effectually, yet how gently, the death-tipped arrow is withdrawn, and the balm of Gilead is applied.

Can we paint the emotion of the wounded Israelite, as, stung by the fiery serpent, and already experiencing the cold convulsions of death, he casts his languid eye towards yonder brazen emblem? Can we depict his joy as that eye rekindles and the pulsations of life return? Now, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so has the Son of man been lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." O there is nothing in nature, nothing in the release from bodily pain, nothing in the bestowment of temporal good, that properly illustrates the transition from a state of sin and condemnation to one of hope and joy. Spring is beautiful as she puts forth her virgin life after the apparent death which so long had reigned over the face of nature. Her tender blade, her half-expanded leaf, her timid flower her dewdrops, and her soft, calm skies, are all animating expressions of new-born joy; but how much more lovely is the soul that has just waked up to a life of holiness, cast off its grave clothes, come forth

out of its sepulchre, and bears the mild impress of God's renewing grace. Here is a subject for the joy of angels, and over it they *do* rejoice. All heaven is moved at such a scene. The soul which is the subject of this change is "full of joy with the light of God's countenance." This is the joy of salvation—of salvation through Jesus Christ—of salvation from the curse of the law, from the dominion of sin, from the woes of the second death.

CHAPTER XI.

JOYFUL PROMISES.

If there is any thing on earth allied to the joys of heaven, it is the smile on the countenance of a new-born soul. The eye is more eloquent than the tongue. The moisture that bedews it is no token of sorrow. The storm is past, the winds are hushed, and these tears are like the last drops of the shower trembling and glistening in the joyous sunbeam. Hope and love seem to vie with each other in spreading a verdant path for the feet of the young pilgrim. His skies are all bright, and his song is only in exultant strains. This is the young convert. His soul has just begun to beat with the joys of salvation.

We could dwell with pleasure on this lovely picture; but we are aware that these early joys are not without some passing clouds, and that the soul in its progress meets with vicissitudes analogous to the varying incidents of an earthly pilgrimage. But God has given the Christian a staff on which to lean, and by which—more potent than the magic wand—he is enabled to tread cheerfully and securely his path to the skies. I refer to the *promises* of the Bible.

When the Christian experiences the joy of salvation, all these promises are, thenceforward, his inheritance. He has now not only a chart delineating his course, but these starry lights to cheer and guide him on his way. Not a dangerous pitfall can occur, nor a venomous foe aim its fang against him; but he has, in these promises, expedients and antidotes effectual to ward off the danger. There is no situation into which even his own indiscretion can throw him where they will not apply. "Great and precious" are these promises, and well calculated to encourage and animate the pilgrim.

If we go back to our primitive state, we find that while our first parents were bleeding under the wounds which their sin had inflicted, and while the note of condemnation was yet ringing in their ears, a most precious promise came, like a healing balm, from their injured Sovereign, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." On this promise the patriarchs lived; and, in view of it, arranged the altar and the sacrifice in order to keep it the more vividly before the mind. Abraham took the promise of Jehovah as his guiding star in that pilgrimage which he prosecuted, until he rested in the cave of Machpelah. He was "the father of the faithful," and his confidence in these assurances of the Almighty was such as to justify the appellation.

But the promises were not confined to a *temporal* inheritance even in the case of Abraham and his immediate posterity. They *included* Canaan, but pointed to a brighter inheritance above. So also with respect to believers in our own days, while some of the promises of God appertain to "the life that now is," the most of them refer to "that which is to come."

There is no state of mind nor any outward situation in which we may not find some divine promise applicable to our wants. How many are the fluctuations to which we are liable in this sinful and changeful state. These vicissitudes are appointed by divine wisdom and goodness to test our sincerity, to strengthen our faith, and to drive us away from earthly supports to the simple and solid basis of heavenly truth. We learn not its preciousness until we are in circumstances to apply it. Hence, when the soul is perplexed and cast down from the loss of its sensible joys, it has recourse to the promises which declare, that "light is sown for the righteous;" and "whoso walketh in darkness and seeth no light, let him trust in the Lord and stay himself upon his God." When temptation presses and the believer seems ready to yield, he is roused and sustained by the assurance that "God will make a way of escape;" and that if we "resist the devil, he will flee from us." In sickness, the

Christian can pillow his head on the pledge, "Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness;" and in the hour of death—that dread hour when mortal strength gives way—he has the consolatory assurance, that though he walk through the valley of the shadow of death, no evil shall befall him, since God is with him, and his rod and staff are there to comfort him.

The divine promises cover all the Christian's earthly changes, and refer to all his earthly relations. They are not only for *him*, but for "his *children*," and seem to have a prospective bearing on their temporal and eternal welfare, as if, in paternal condescension, our heavenly Father intended we should be exempt from an over-anxiety respecting these dearest objects of earth. In the loss of earthly friendships, in deepest poverty, in the most threatening danger, under persecutions, and when envy and malignity have sharpened their arrows against him, the Christian can go to the divine word and gather fresh strength to suffer, and obtain new and glorious motives to persevere in the path of duty. In the mighty conflict with self and sin, to what can the soldier of the cross look, but to these assurances of strength and of victory which his great Captain and Leader has given him? Here, in this armory, is a piece fitted for the soul in every situation of attack and of defence. The

panoply is complete. Clothed in it, no weapon that is formed against the Christian can prosper. It is more impervious than that of the famed Achilles, that left one mortal spot exposed, to which the fatal arrow at last found access. The promises of God secure the Christian from ultimate defeat, and give him the pledge of final victory.

No wonder that Bunyan, in his beautiful allegory, gave prominence to the scroll which Christian carried in his bosom, and by consulting which in critical junctures he was enabled to go on his way rejoicing. This scroll contained these "great and precious promises." How joyfully may all succeeding pilgrims travel on to their rest with such sweet encouraging assurances. What a contrast does *their* state present to that of those who, amid the storms and tempests of life, have no star to guide, and no secure anchor to hold them.

But these promises not only solace and animate the pious mind in view of its own personal state, they also gild the distant future as it relates to the prospects of Zion and the final triumphs of redemption. Over this fluctuating scene the believer can look with a calm confidence that the Almighty is at work to fulfil the great designs of his kingdom, and give to his Son the universal sceptre. Are not these promises joyful? Can he who studies them and trusts in them be the sport of varying winds

and adverse currents? May he not plant his feet upon the rock, and contemplate the billows that beat harmless against it? Above all, he can glance his eye to that region where "there is no more sea," and where the clouds which here had curtained the footsteps of the Almighty, will have cleared away and revealed the wisdom of his plans, the benignity of his acts, the rectitude of his government, and the triumphs of his mercy.

CHAPTER XII.

JOYFUL PROSPECTS.

The animating promises to which we have referred, naturally lead us to contemplate the blissful *prospects* which they unfold. Most of them, as was observed, relate to that world which is to come. Their full accomplishment is to be experienced when the soul has passed through its earthly discipline and reached its final and glorious rest.

The Christian fixes his eye on the end, and finds his imagination busied there in combining the bright visions of eternal felicity.

Now, whatever intermediate joys or sorrows a person is destined to realize, yet is he cheered and sustained if the end wears the aspect of predominant good. But by none, except the *Christian*, can this end be contemplated with entire satisfaction. We do not deny that even *he* has at times his dark forebodings, nor do we assert that his faith always mounts to a triumphant tone when he surveys the certainty and the solemnity of death. But his religion certainly does much to neutralize its horrors. It gives him the promise of support in the fearful crisis, and reveals to his faith the certain and glorious prospects which lie beyond. It assures

aim that when "flesh and heart shall fail, God will be the strength of his heart and his portion for ever." It declares that as now his greatest burden is sin, hereafter that burden shall be felt no more; and that since his strongest aspirations here are for greater degrees of holiness, his desire shall be satisfied when he awakes in the image and likeness of God.

But exemption from the evils of this fallen state, both natural and moral, including an amount of good which no imagination can picture, and the positive addition of pure and satisfying pleasures, as endless in duration as they are ennobling in their influence on the soul, give us still higher impressions of the Christian's future portion. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

It would ill become the writer to attempt any description of what is indescribable. We sometimes try to give an absent friend some sketch of natural scenery which has been particularly interesting to ourselves. We labor to place before him the distinct features of the landscape, to throw the same glowing picture upon his conceptions which has impressed itself on our own, but we feel that our powers are inadequate to the task. We cannot make the scene live and breathe before him. The

freshness, the fragrance, the sweet sounds, the soothing, insinuating beauties which steal in through every sense, and tranquillize or enrapture the heart, we cannot infuse into the description. Now, if we strive in vain to sketch a scene from nature so as to make an adequate impression, how poor must be the most labored attempt to set forth the glories of that world which we have *not seen* as yet, and of which even the primeval earthly paradise was but an emblem.

When we speak of joyful prospects, we look at the end. Man lives more upon the future than upon the present. Hope is the busy feeling or emotion that gives elasticity to the soul's powers.

The heir to an estate expects soon to pass out of his minority. He chides the leaden-winged hours which move so slowly towards the period when he is to take possession of his inheritance. His mind is teeming with high anticipations of the pleasures which will then be at his command. But what is this prospect compared with that which the Christian entertains? It is not to earthly and withering joys that he looks forward, but "to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

The warrior thinks of the civic crown which admiring and grateful citizens are to place upon his brow, and the prospect nerves his arm and sus-

tains his courage. It lights up the darkest scene of conflict, and makes the severest toil easy to be borne. The mariner far off on the deep lives on the hope of a quiet haven, and the greeting of loved ones, whose caresses are to make him forget the boisterous winds and the impending dangers of his voyage. But what are those prospects compared with the immortal crown for which the Christian contends, and which, if he is "faithful unto death," will be given him amid the congratulations of heaven's blissful inhabitants? What haven is so calm as the "haven of eternal rest;" where, after being tossed upon this troubled sea, the soul is at last admitted, and moors itself along the banks of that river of life which is clear as crystal, and which is skirted by the immortal fruits of paradise? Cheering prospects these. Surely the Christian can and ought to rejoice. The intermediate events may not, to the eye of sense, seem so auspicious as from his admitted character we should anticipate; but we are to estimate his happiness not only by what is visible and present, but by what is unseen, and what is yet to be realized.

The pathway to our rest, if not all smooth and verdant, is sufficiently so to give it a decided preference over those which the worldling and the sensualist tread. But the great attraction lies in the direction which it takes, and in the glories to which

it leads. We can bear to traverse a rugged way, if it terminate in a fertile country, or if it conduct us to a splendid and well-furnished home. Now the Christian's course is far from being a rugged one: on the contrary, as appears from what has been said, it has much to make the traveller elate and joyful. But O, its end! See where it leads his feet; to what a calm and cloudless region it conducts him! HEAVEN is its termination. *Its* mansions of rest are ever in view. Like the never-fading glory which Bunyan keeps before his hero's eye, and which, though far in the distance, serves to cheer him on through difficulties and dangers, these promised scenes appeal incessantly to the eye of faith, and sustain the spirit in its upward flight. Here is a view of the Christian's prospects, which even they who deny his claim to *present* felicity must admit to be a joyful one. Ah, how often does the child of vanity sigh to think that he cannot have this world and heaven too; and with what gladness would he at last accept of the good man's prospects and share his bright reward. But to do this he must consent to take his cross, to bear his burdens, to walk in the same path; then, and not *till* then, may he indulge the hope that "his last end will be like his."

CHAPTER XIII.

OBSTRUCTIONS TO PIOUS JOY.

Having now developed some of the resources of Christian cheerfulness, it is time to inquire whether we avail ourselves of them, and are as joyful as our religion is designed to make us.

The very statement of this question brings a sigh, I fear, from the reader, who is conscious, perhaps, that while there is no deficiency in his religion, there is a very deep and criminal one in *himself*.

It is with the view to make the Christian understand his privileges, and to improve them to the furtherance of his happiness, that these pages are indited; and this cannot be effected without laying open some of the *obstructions* which hinder the soul from reaching that mount of clear vision and bright prospects to which the blessed gospel invites us.

It is a melancholy circumstance, especially in its influence upon the unthinking world, that the joy of the professors of religion seems so seldom to flow directly from their piety. Some are scarcely distinguishable from the world in their apparent sources of felicity. They drink eagerly at the same fountains, and range as freely and as exultingly

among the same pleasures. But little need be said of such, since their preferences, and their associates, and their habitual joys evince that it is very possible to wear the name without realizing the blessings of the Christian.

But we will take those who, in the judgment of charity, "have passed from death unto life," and see whether even among these there is not room for improvement—whether some serious obstructions do not exist to the full development of their moral influence, and to the allowed exercise of their pious joy.

In the world of nature, it is astonishing how much attention and cultivation will do in advancing the strength and the beauty of her productions. The plant that exhibited but a stinted growth when wild and uncared for, or when overshadowed by other vegetation, if removed from these uncongenial circumstances and set in a more favorable position, will soon erect its head, put on additional verdure, and bear more abundant fruit. On the other hand, the finest tree that grows in the rich fruitery, if neglected by the husbandman, or transferred to a less congenial region, will soon become dwarfish and unsightly, even should it not actually wither and die. Think ye it is the reverse of this in the kingdom of grace? Has Providence no moral lessons to inculcate by the analogies of nature? Are

there not obstructions as well as facilities to the growth of grace, and can we be insensible to the importance of ascertaining them ?

It is not the design of this little work to enter minutely into Christian experience, and trace all the varying symptoms of the soul under the action of its remaining depravity. There are causes of depression and fear which operate on the Christian in every stage of his journey, but do not necessarily hinder him in his course, nor for any length of time deprive him of his spiritual joys. The power of the great adversary is fatal somewhat in accordance with the manner in which it is brought to bear upon the soul. A sudden attack, however overwhelming, is less injurious than the gradual but certain relaxation of pious watchfulness. Apollyon, when striding our path and brandishing his fiery darts, is not so much to be dreaded as when, by some of his subtle agents, he spreads a flowery path for our feet, and invites us away from our prescribed journey. In the former case the dread is but momentary; and if the foe be faced and by grace resisted, the Christian soldier, though intensely beset, will come off conqueror and sing the song of victory. This will add to his joys, instead of diminishing them. But in the other case, the approach is so conducted, and with such well-concerted schemes and appliances, that the Christian is off

his guard, and listens to the tempter before he is aware of his designs. The first wrong step seems so easy, and to be so slight a deviation from the "king's highway," that the Christian ventures to take it; but he soon finds, that to be *out* of the path is more dangerous far, than while *in* it and with his face towards Zion to meet the most formidable of his adversaries. How surely, if not speedily, will his joys fall off under these wanderings from the path of duty. Be his first emotions as a young convert ever so pure and joyous, they will not abide these subtle insinuations, but, like the tender plant which can meet unhurt the rush of the tempest, yet droops and hangs its head under the silent but more fatal action of the frost, they will fade under the seductive influence of worldly pleasures. It will be in unison with the object of this work, therefore to consider the obstructions which arise from this latter cause, inasmuch as in our country, and in the present state of society, the dangers to vital piety and to all its lovely fruits are far greater from the action of earthly influences than from the sudden onset of the prince of darkness.

Every age has its peculiarities by which the state of the Christian church is greatly affected; and it is important to know what and how numerous are the influences adverse to piety in this age, and how

certainly Christian character is modified by them. An army is sometimes overthrown by a direct and powerful assault, but more frequently perhaps by stratagem. It will find itself marching on apparently unresisted. The cities will seem to be flung open, and the highway clear—something like the onward progress of Napoleon's grand army in Russia—but in the mean time the foe, though concealed himself, is observant of his victim. The plot is at length developed, and the dreadful discomfiture takes place; in which case, if the betrayed army make good its retreat, it is with broken ranks and dispirited feelings and trailing standards. Something like this is to be apprehended in the influence of the world upon the hosts of Israel at the present day. There is great security on the part of Christians, and great apparent yielding on the part of the world, in order to accommodate and thus draw upon its own ground the pledged soldiers of the cross. Here is the danger, and let every Christian look at it and inquire whether *he*, as one of this great army, is not marching in the wrong direction.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONSTANT CONTACT WITH THE WORLD UNFAVORABLE TO PIOUS JOY.

One part of "pure religion" is to keep "unspotted from the world." How few reflect daily on this feature of true piety, and how little danger is felt by professors of religion from *direct and constant contact with the world.* But look at this beautiful allusion again. How carefully does the delicate hand adjust and guard the unsoiled garment, as the path becomes obstructed and the dress exposed. One spot will mar its beauty and make its owner sigh; but if by rough contact with some offensive object it should be defiled, it will henceforth be laid aside as useless. Is the care which we bestow upon the soul, or even on the Christian character, to be compared with this? And would not some professors sigh over a soiled garment more than at the gradual diminution of spiritual purity which they are experiencing by constant intercourse with the world?

But shall we therefore retire into obscurity, and, like the ascetic, pass an act of non-intercourse with society, while we pore in silent abstraction over our own peculiar feelings? We answer, that one ex-

treme, if *dangerous*, does not justify us in flying to the other, if it be *forbidden*. Now our Saviour, in his commands and counsels, has not advised to this latter extreme, but has actually indicated his disapprobation of it, by declaring that his followers are "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world;" and by exhorting them to "let their light shine before men," it is clear that he requires us to live in the world, and to illustrate our religion before its eyes. In his intercessory prayer, also, he says, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." This is precisely in harmony with the characteristic of pure religion to "keep unspotted from the world," and this is all we plead for: that a Christian, if he would not let down his profession and part with his appropriate joy and felicity, must walk carefully in a world so filled with objects calculated to mar his high vocation.

There are extremes, namely, the ascetic life, and the over-tasked and jaded spirit that passes its almost entire existence in the busy and care-corroding world. We shall not undertake to estimate the comparative guilt and danger of these extremes, but simply observe, that in *our* times, if there be guilt in the life of an ascetic, it is not very probable that many professors of religion will incur it. The danger with us lies on the other extreme; and *assimilation with*

rather than *separation from* the world, is likely to involve us in guilt, and to take from us our confidence and joy.

The world has almost given up its persecuting spirit, either because Christianity has become so predominant as fearlessly to ask the shield of the law to protect her, or—which it is feared is the more palpable reason—because there is so little of her pure spirit manifested as not to excite opposition, and hence a sort of compromise has gradually though not *avowedly* taken place. The world will tolerate piety with such modifications in the conduct of her professors that it will not disturb the fears of the worldling, but rather afford an apology for his continued idolatry. The line of separation having thus gradually faded, the professor is solicited to part with his scruples, and to mingle indiscriminately with men of all principles and professions.

Now, what is the effect of this? In the first place, the pious man is by these circumstances thrown off his guard, and goes into the world with almost as little fear of evil consequences as if he were associating only with the good. The next effect of such free and constant intercourse is, to diminish the glow of pious feeling and to weaken the power of conscience. At length the professor can scarcely live *out* of the world. Its business, its

politics, its stirring events, yea, even its *pleasures* are gradually becoming topics of deep interest. His joy is now derived from other sources than it was wont to be. The place of retirement used to have attractions, and the throne of grace used to be visited as the soul's happy home. How many hours of tranquil delight have been passed in secret, the world shut out, and the spirit taking excursions to the land of Beulah; but now these joys are gone. Serious obstructions have occurred. The *world* has put in its claim. It has gone to the Christian and fastened on him anew its chain. It has required of him what all tyrants do, that he should acknowledge no other master. It says to him, "You may exercise your religion on the Sabbath, when my service cannot be performed, and I will allow you a few moments of hurried and heartless prayer in the morning and in the evening, but the rest of your time and attention I claim for the purpose of business, society, and pleasure."

We will not undertake to say how many professors of piety are thus drawn away by the world and live wholly amidst its exciting scenes. But many are exposed to this course of life from the peculiar state of society in our day and country. Their business and their engagements render them the easy victims of the world's temptations. It is this constant contact with the world which we

deprecate, and which, more than any one cause, we dread as undermining the vital principles of piety. Is such a Christian happy? Is *his* joy "the joy of the Lord?" Ah, if he has ever tasted of pious joy, he must feel the sad contrast in the meagre and unsatisfying pleasures which are tendered to him. Look at Demas. See his care-worn brow that used to wear the smile of heaven, and his sorrow-shaded face that seems to say, "My *religious* joys are gone;" and yet he has too much conscience left to appropriate without fearful misgivings the pleasures of the world. If he would speak out, he would exclaim, "I was once a happy man; I lived on the promises of God, and gathered my joys along the green pastures of his grace. I loved to go alone and commune with my Maker, and felt as if the world was but a vanity. Alas, what am I now? Day after day I am busied and anxious about many things, while the "one thing needful" is neglected. The business I have chosen, and the engagements which I have made, drive me on, against the remonstrating voice of conscience, while my soul is oppressed with the fearful idea of final apostasy and ruin!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

THE lamentation of Demas, with which the last chapter concludes, implies a fault too common among professing Christians, especially those whose business and engagements lead them into frequent contact with the world. This obstruction to their piety, and of course to their true felicity and joy, is great in proportion to the time consumed and the interest felt in earthly pleasures and connections.

We do not admit the impossibility of mingling with the world and still retaining our peace of mind, our Christian influence, and our pious joy. Many might be named who keep "the garment unspotted" and the soul unclogged amid the cares of earth, and under the pressure of its daily toil. It would be an argument against our religion if it disqualified its possessor for the performance of any duty, social, civil, or political, if it did not in fact fit him the better to discharge these obligations. It is in accordance with the spirit of Christianity to meet cheerfully every occasion which Providence furnishes for the promotion of the general good. It is the duty of her professors to shrink from no burden which may lawfully be borne, and to retreat

from no station, if personally qualified, in which they may serve their country without dishonoring their religion. "Faith overcomes the world." This is the testimony of heaven. But this victory implies not a retreat from, but a conflict with the foe. We are to pray not to be "taken out of the world, but to be kept from the evil."

But while all this is true, it is nevertheless *equally* true that mingling constantly with the world is a perilous experiment, upon which few can venture without detriment to their religion. The danger arises from not fully understanding the tendency of worldly influences upon the soul, and also from not taking the proper precautions to counteract it. One of these precautions is, to allot a sufficient portion of time for the daily, habitual improvement of the pious affections. If this were done, there would be comparatively little danger from the subtle foe.

The Christian is represented as a warrior clothed in a panoply which he is to use both for attack and for defence. Now this armor is to be on him continually. It is also requisite that every day he examine it, to see if it be well fitted and properly polished, since not a day passes in which his enemy is not watching to plant "an arrow between the joints of the harness." But how can this be done if the soldier is always on the field and never in

his tent? By mingling constantly with his foes, he may be overpowered through weariness, and have his armor stript from him ere he is aware of it. But waiving figurative language, it must be confessed that there is great negligence in many as to the manner in which their closet duties are performed, and a miserly appropriation of time to God and to the soul. *They live too constantly in the world to allow of their living in it without great detriment to their piety.* To walk unharmed this dangerous path, the Christian must duly contemplate his exposedness, and so proportion his time between his business engagements and the claims of devotion as that the latter shall neutralize completely the injurious tendency of the former. There must be daily retirement, and enough of it, or the soul will lose its joys, if not its piety, amid the bustling scenes of earth.

It is a fixed law of our nature, that whatever most constantly appeals to the thoughts acts powerfully upon the moral affections, and thus gives the impress of itself upon the soul. All experience testifies to this. Let, then, the Christian plunge into the agitated sea of earthly cares, and from day to day fix his thoughts upon the business, the plans, the politics, and the pleasures of the world—let him give his mind intensely and habitually to these things, and what will become of his religion? What

judgment will men form of it? But suppose, in the mean time, but a very small portion of each day is allotted to prayer and other devotional duties; or, what perhaps is possible, these duties are irregularly and superficially performed; where will be the expression of his piety, and who in *his* case would suppose that it was the mainspring of the soul's felicity? Is it not easy to see that the world must, under such circumstances, impress itself strongly on the mind, and proportionably efface the divine image of piety.

Let the Christian, on the other hand, consider well his exposedness, and so arrange his affairs that religion shall have its just claim in the apportionment of his time. Let him not be in the world except when duty and necessity call him there, and let him prepare, by God's grace, for coming in conflict with it. It must be an habitual, daily preparation. Some professors of religion who could be named, appear to act on the principle of putting off converse with their own hearts until old-age or sickness compels them to it: and they seem to understand our Lord, when he says, "work while the day lasteth," as calling them to an unremitted effort for worldly good. Alas, such will bitterly lament their course. The happy Christian gives a due proportion of his time daily to his God. He has his seasons of retirement, and will not allow the

intrusive world to rob him of them. He is thus prepared for the intercourse and collision of active life, and is enabled to walk the fiery furnace uncorched by its flame. His mind is habitually turned to God, and his religion sanctifying his worldly business, makes it the occasion of a richer development of his heaven-born nature.

Gaius is called to bear as many and as oppressive worldly burdens as any man. But his religion suffers not by this necessity. Indeed it is his piety which enables him so calmly to meet and to discharge the arduous duties of his station. Wherever you see him his countenance is calm, and he is always ready to speak of higher joys, even when the world goes prosperously with him. He is evidently a man of prayer. His earliest thoughts are given to God, and ere the business of the day or the engagements of social life—clamorous as they are for his attention—have preferred their request, he is settling the higher claims of the soul, and by earnest prayer is equipping it for its daily conflict. Gaius is no recluse. He is not indifferent to the pleasures of life when they may be enjoyed without the sacrifice of principle, nor is he backward in giving his influence and his toil in all that respects even the temporal good of his fellow-men. But one look at the man will tell you that his highest qualification is that he is a Christian. His joys

are evidently those of true piety. He keeps the private altar bright with the incense of devotion; and by first making sure his walk with God, he is enabled to go forth into the world with the calm consciousness that he who has appointed to him its duties and exposed him to its dangers, will assist him in the discharge of the one and will protect him from the other. It is needless to add that he is a happy man.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PURSUIT OF RICHES UNFAVORABLE TO A CHRISTIAN'S HAPPINESS.

Why is it that some Christians are found in such constant contact with the world? Why are closet duties abridged or neglected, while time is freely and even lavishly given to business and to pleasure? Ah, it has been sadly answered in the almost unbounded *thirst for gain*, which, like a sweeping epidemic, has found its way into the habitations and the hearts of the pious as well as among others. There is nothing in modern times which so fearfully *threatens* the cause of vital piety; and if Providence does not meet the evil by an overwhelming rebuke, it is impossible to calculate how deep and wide-spread it may become.

The astonishing anomaly has been witnessed of men professing to live above the world, wholly bent on acquiring its possessions. Those who by their vows renounce its pomps and its vanities, have been seen foremost in plans to secure these distinctions, and even ostentatious in the exhibition of them. Now we would know if the self-denying religion of Jesus authorizes this course, or if piety is to be held responsible for conduct by which her

principles are outraged and set at defiance. Alas, her bosom has bled under this wound until her very existence has been seriously threatened.

It will not be denied, I presume, that we are under obligations to *imitate* our Saviour as well as to *believe* in him. Indeed, we cannot truly believe *without* imitating him.

But must we imitate him in his poverty? Must we cast away our pillows of down and vacate our comfortable mansions, that, like Jesus, we may "not have where to lay our heads?" Or must we neglect to provide for our own, to place our families in independent circumstances? "Surely," says the thrifty and money-making Christian, "piety does not require this of us." Well, admit that she does not—admit that she allows us to sleep on our soft pillows, to live in fine houses, to ride in splendid vehicles, and to feast on rich dainties, while he whom we serve possessed none of these things; or admit, if your taste be such, that she allows you to prefer plainer accommodations with the sweet consciousness of more hoarded treasure—and the conduct of many professedly pious would seem to claim that religion *does* allow all this—admit it, and we have still to ask what she *disallows*. Is there any abridgment of our earthly desires which she demands? If there is none—if we may embark in the pursuit of riches with as unbridled an appetite

as the professed votaries of the world, and vie with them in the manifestation of external grandeur, it must follow that Jesus did not *mean* what he said, or that he was mistaken when he declared, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." There is some difference between literally impoverishing ourselves for the sake of being like Christ, and manifesting a totally opposite character in a greedy and all-absorbing pursuit of the world. There is not quite so much danger in the *former* case of serving God too much, as there is in the *latter* of not serving him at all. It has not been the fault of Christians that they have been over-righteous in this matter.

It is a subject for serious inquiry, how far the pursuit of riches is consistent with true and genuine piety; and whether the changes, political and social, which have taken place since Christ laid down his self-denying rules, do really permit us to overlook their obligation, and make common cause with other men in all their prospects and their plans of gain. In order to settle this point, we seem to need, that, with his fan in his hand, Jesus should come to sift out the commingled opinions and practices which have supervened; and separating the precious from the vile, to show who *are* and who are *not* his genuine disciples.

But is there no criterion by which we can under

stand the mind of Christ on this subject? Is there no voice within that utters its verdict, and assents or dissents to the position which is sometimes taken on the question? Hearest thou not something in the secret soul that speaks of departed joys, and a backslidden state, and overclouded hopes? Is there not in the Christian's experience a response to what Jesus has said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon?" How many are there who ran well the first part of their race, who seemed to have their eye on the heavenly prize with a fair prospect of obtaining it, but who caught, as by a side glance, a view of the tempting bait of riches, and all at once their feet loitered in the course, their eye was averted from the goal, and ere long they were found running with equal, if not greater zeal, after the rewards of mammon. But how has this diversion of their interest and zeal operated upon their spirits? Has it had the effect to augment or to diminish their joy? Are they as happy in serving mammon as they were formerly in serving God? But it is replied, "We have not given up our religion; although it has not, we admit, the same influence upon our happiness as it once had. We have not actually lost sight of its obligations nor intermitted entirely its duties. We worship God in the family if we do not in the closet, and we are found in our seats in the sanctuary even if we have lost

our interest in the social prayer-meeting. Besides, by gaining more of the world we are enabled to *give* more for the spread of the gospel, so that we cannot be charged with an actual defection from the ranks of the pious." Sad confession this, of pious joy sacrificed on the altar of mammon. Poor apology for relinquishing the crown of glory, and turning aside after "the lust of the eye and the pride of life." And what, after all, is the gain? Will it compensate for the loss of the soul's true felicity? Will it make up for the consciousness of the disapprobation of heaven, which, even in moments of earthly prosperity, must be a heavy drawback on our joy? Shall we run more fleetly on our race after loading our pockets with golden weights, or wrestle with more success against "principalities and powers," when we have relaxed our moral energies by earthly indulgences? How easy it is to find excuses for our sins. What specious but sophistical arguments will Satan urge to set us upon a pursuit of the world, and thus rob us of our peace and joy. "All these will I give thee, if thou wilt unchain thy affections from the gospel chariot and link them to mammon's car; and why should not *you* have the means of enjoyment, and your children the means of support, as well as others? Then, too, see *how much good you can do* with riches; what a field of benevolence they will open to you

Why need you hesitate? There is no church censure can be passed upon you for this pursuit." The reasoning seems good, says "the old man which is corrupt," and I will act upon it. So farewell the peace of God until I have gained the peace which the "world giveth."

CHAPTER XVII.

SOCIAL AND BUSINESS PLEDGES OBSTRUCTIONS TO A CHRISTIAN'S JOY.—SOCIAL PLEDGES.

THE Christian professor has an important practical point to settle, namely, how much intercourse with the world is safe and allowable, and what proportion of his time should be employed daily in communion with God.

Such are the varying circumstances and temperaments of individuals, that one standard, it must be evident, will not apply in all cases. But by a conscientious and quick-sighted Christian, the following rule, or rather criterion, may be safely consulted. *If he finds his interest in the closet on the wane, and his interest in worldly business or social pleasure gradually deepening, he should suspect that too small a proportion of time is given to devotion.* In this case he is evidently too much in the world. His happiness as a Christian is thereby endangered, and he is called upon at once to retrieve lost ground. His confession and his prayer must be, "Lord, I have gone astray like a lost sheep: seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments."

The great sources of temptation in our day are social and business engagements. These are entered

into sometimes without due reflection on their ten dency to weaken the divine life of piety in the soul. Some Christian people seem to think, or rather seem to act as if they thought, they can take "coals of fire in the bosom and the clothes not be burned."

The pleasures of *social life* are tendered to the Christian on the ground that they are innocent, and therefore allowable; and, without much discrimination as to the forms they assume or the deleterious ingredients accompanying them, he is persuaded to indulge himself in them, even at the expense of his pious joys.

The world knows well how to graduate these social entertainments so as not to alarm the weak conscience, nor at the outset to betray its designs. But step by step is the unapprised soul led on, until it can relish and even desire a scale of pleasurable excitement, which once would have startled its fears and driven it back to its peaceful and soul-satisfying retirement.

An invitation comes to Theodosia, indited in the usual complimentary strain, in which it is affirmed that nothing more than *a social few* are to pass an evening in a very quiet way. The plan is well-adjusted, and the timid Christian is induced to accede. But from this moment there is an unaccountable perturbation in her mind. She has been so long accustomed to the calm pleasures of home.

and especially to the pure delights of communion with God, that the bare anticipation of so different a scene seems to have entirely unsettled her peace. It is like the sudden inundation of a river which a few hours before flowed with clear and gentle stream, but is now rushing on with an impetuous and turbid flood. The busy notes of preparation are now heard, and the mind, torn from its accustomed topics, is forced to think of frivolities. How hard it is now to read with fixed attention a chapter in the Bible. How difficult to send the "thoughts that breathe" to the mercy-seat above. Who can doubt that a violent shock is felt through the soul. Away flies this dove from the peaceful ark to disport its wing over the agitated scene which is prepared for it. The scene is brilliant beyond anticipation, captivating to the senses, and impressive to the youthful imagination. The quiet social convention is wonderfully transmuted into the gay and almost uproarious assembly. Forced smiles and flattering compliments have usurped the place of profitable conversation, and every thing in the company and in the arrangements seems adapted to banish serious thought from the mind. Is Theodosia happy in this gay circle? There is in her countenance something that seems to say, "I am *trying* to be happy." It will be well for her if this trial is unsuccessful. It will be to her praise,

and for her peace, if the next similar temptation is resisted. The danger is, that she may acquire a fondness for that which at first was rather tolerated than desired. To be out of society, it will be suggested, is not her duty: as if society was found alone where the crowded contact of frivolous minds exists Yes, the danger is that she may be induced to repeat the experiment, and by being often in such circumstances, gradually to exchange her former joys for those which are altogether empty and unsatisfying. On the altar of mere social pleasure she may be tempted to sacrifice sweet peace of conscience. Her Bible, her closet, her walks of usefulness may be neglected to attend to the calls of time's most cruel murderers. We again ask, Can she be happy?

The true and proper test of these social influences is to be found in their effect on the devotional habits. If they break up the duties of the closet, indispose the mind for meditation, and make the Bible a dull book, we have reason to suspect they are indulged to an unlawful extent. There is *then* something in them positively injurious to piety of heart, and we must at once restrict ourselves to a more moderate and less exciting scale of pleasures; one which will leave us at least *as* favorably disposed for Christian duty as it found us.

Let us not be understood by these remarks as condemning all social entertainments, nor as argu-

ing against a free interchange of thought and feeling not strictly religious—as wishing to convert every circle of friendship into a prayer-meeting; but simply as putting the Christian on his guard against the exciting and deleterious influence of those scenes where the direct object evidently is to elicit the sensual and to crush the spiritual feelings of man. Young Christians should be cautioned against committing themselves in social engagements which may embarrass their consciences, weaken their moral strength, and extinguish their pious joys. Having embraced the cross, and professed that their superior attachments are found in true piety, they must be careful to impress the world with the fact, that having tasted of purer pleasures, they have no longings after those which they have abandoned. If they are easily drawn off to indulge in mere earthly excitement, it will be inferred that they are disappointed in the power of piety to make them happy, and thus will their conduct confirm the pleasurist in his fatal choice. Piety *will* make them happy, if they do not introduce a rival to her influence; but how can any man expect that she will continue to smile upon him, if he take to his bosom her deadliest enemy, *the world?* How can the youthful professor just alluded to expect that piety will follow her to scenes where its name is never mentioned, or *if* mentioned, is too often alluded

to only by way of jest or ridicule? How can she expect that religion will fill her soul with its heavenly joys, when that soul is already preöccupied with grovelling pleasures? Let her take her stand against the world's allurements, and find in God and in his service her supreme delight, and then will piety pour upon her its celestial smile; and then, like the dove with tired wing, will she find a hand stretched forth from the ark to draw her in and give her a resting-place that loses none of its charms from its contrast with earth's tumultuous and stormy scenes.

CHAPTER XVIII

BUSINESS PLEDGES.

When a Christian can mingle in general society without injury to his piety or the sacrifice of his peace, it may be proper for him to a certain extent to indulge the social propensities; but in this case it is implied that his *highest* joys are not gathered from such intercourse. Even when he practices it, it must be on the principle of rendering the social sympathies subservient to his usefulness, of laying open opportunities to do good among those with whom he associates; thus making piety the *end*, and social converse the *medium*, through which it is promoted. But, after all, the Christian will find that his happiest hours are passed "among the saints and near his God," and that the interchange of feelings with those who are walking the same road, and aiming at the same mark, and encountering the same difficulties and dangers, is fraught with more real satisfaction than mere social pleasures, however refined the intercourse or intellectual the conversation.

There is another point of no small importance which deserves consideration, namely, *the business pledges* or engagements into which Christians are

sometimes drawn, to the injury of their piety and the extinguishment of their religious joy.

Prompted by the desire of success in their business, or listening to injudicious counsel, good men are sometimes sadly ensnared by the world. They will enter into engagements which, at the time of making them, they sincerely intend to fulfil, not calculating upon the possible reverses of the times, nor the changeful nature of commercial affairs; but alas, they thus find themselves often sadly committed to men who have little sympathy with their distress, and less regard still for their reputation as Christians. Now for a professor of piety to see himself in this snare, and to know that a thousand tongues are busy in remarking on his situation, and insinuating, perhaps, that "his religion has made him no better than he should be," must oppress his spirits and annihilate his peace of mind. It is the worst policy imaginable for a pious man to stand deeply pledged to those who are mere men of the world. He should prefer even poverty to this; nor should any counsel of friends, real or pretended, nor any hopes of worldly gain, however flattering at the time, influence him to such a course as may, in the fluctuations of trade, place his character for integrity in a suspicious light, and lay upon his soul a crushing anxiety. It is impossible for a pious man to be happy amid such embarrass

ments, especially if they have come upon him in consequence of reckless pledges made under a too eager desire for the wealth of this world.

The man whose heart is weaned from earthly attachments, or who has an habitual preference for heavenly things, will not be likely to fall into this snare; but, satisfied with moderate success in his worldly calling, he will so order his affairs as, if possible, "to owe no man any thing" but love. At all events, he will make no pledges which he has not a fair prospect of redeeming, so that in any event his religious character shall not be impugned, nor his religious joys extinguished. Such a man will retain his equanimity of soul, and go on his way rejoicing even when others are "careful and troubled about many things."

It has become customary to prosecute enlarged business enterprises by means of joint-stock companies, and Christian men have found themselves often very painfully committed by the operation of some of these associations. A majority of the company, looking only at the gains which the association was formed to secure, feel it to be a matter of small consequence if in the prosecution of their enterprise the holy Sabbath is violated. This is lamentably true of railroad and steam-boat companies Now, at the hazard of being considered over-scrupulous, Christians are called upon not to commit them-

selves in any combination whose acts shall conflict with the laws of God. It will be of no avail to say that "being in a minority they cannot control this thing." This is a sort of apology which will not stand the test of Christian casuistry, especially if, while uttering it, they expect to receive a portion of the price of desecrated Sabbaths. And if Christians find themselves thus implicated in the violation of God's holy day, it is their duty as speedily as possible to cut loose from the alliance.

How many consciences have been burdened by these indiscreet connections, and how much Christian peace has been sacrificed to promote what is called public spirit and general improvement. The grand question for a pious man to ask and to settle before he commits himself in any business transaction is, *whether it can be prosecuted without injury to his conscience and the infraction of God's laws.* He has no right to sacrifice his joy as a Christian for all the wealth which mammon can confer. He must "seek first the kingdom of God." He "must not touch any unclean thing." He must avoid not only the *reality*, but even "the *appearance of evil.*" With these precepts before him, how can a pious man enter with any reasonable expectations of success upon a business, either on his individual responsibility or as a member of a company, which is to be prosecuted to the injury of public morals and in

violation of the decalogue? How can the mind of a Christian be at peace while such an imputation may be cast upon him? To obtain and to preserve true peace of mind, we must keep "a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men." And how can this be done, if Christians will commit themselves to circumstances which tend directly to embarrass conscience and to weaken the moral force of divine institutions? How much more to be coveted is the condition of the pious but untrammelled artisan, who, content with his daily earnings, has none of these equivocal connections to tempt him, and none of these implicated social and business vices to sully his profession. He can sing his hymn of praise at night, and offer his devout thanksgiving to God, with no such drawback upon his grateful feelings as must be experienced where heaven's gifts are coveted and obtained under circumstances the morality of which is at least very questionable.

Piety, after all, exerts its influence to make the soul happy only where that influence is allowed to predominate. It is unreasonable to ask any more of it. It is requiring too much to expect that it will kindle up its joys in the heart where every counteracting influence is courted, or keep alive on the altar the fires of devotion when the cold flood of earthly cares and pleasures is continually

poured upon it to extinguish them. Nor let piety be blamed for that absence of felicity which characterizes so many professors, when, if the case were investigated, it would be seen that it is not piety, but the *want* of it, which operates to dim the lustre of their example. Let the Christian keep aloof from those ensnaring connections to which we have alluded; and acting on the principle that "godliness with contentment is great gain," let him seek mainly and constantly the "one thing needful," and his path, if it be less attractive to earthly minds, will have the approbation of God, and lead the soul to joys that are pure and unending.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE INFLUENCE OF LIGHT READING OPPOSED TO THE PROGRESS OF PIETY.

The apparatus which the great adversary has brought into action in order to weaken the moral influence of Christians, is varied and well applied. To the sources of evil already enumerated, we must add the flood of *light and ephemeral productions* so constantly issuing from the English and American press.

These are not of course intended for the eye and the mind of the Christian, but are graduated in their sentiments and style to the great mass of volatile spirits who wish for something new and racy to kill a heavy hour, and to kindle a little temporary excitement.

But, unhappily, they too often find their way into those hands which ought to "handle" instead thereof "the word of life." The universal cry is, "Have you read this very interesting work?" The newspapers are lavish in their encomiums, the review enlarges on the genius of its author, and the fashionist seizes the volume yet reeking from the press, in order to be among the first who "have seen it." It is not to be wondered at, then, that this

tempting bait should find its way into the library of a Christian, or be seen among the chaster productions which adorn his parlor table. What "every body reads," it is inferred, "ought to be read by *me*. I shall be singular not to have perused it when the whole town are descanting upon its merits." So, with a little such reasoning, backed by that fondness for novelty and excitement which piety may repress, but does not extinguish, the Bible is suddenly closed, and the flippant volume is already riveting the attention.

It came at the hour of evening prayer. It seemed as if the spiritual foe, anticipating the time when the Christian was to have been on his knees, taking by "violence the kingdom of heaven," sent this light-armed enemy to divert his attention and to deprive him of the hallowed enjoyment. But will he allow the intruder to rob him of his devotions? Will not only the Bible but prayer be postponed until the exciting tale is ended? Alas, it is to be feared, when once the fascination has commenced, that the charm will not be broken even by the voice of conscience muttering in undertones of misspent time and neglected duties. The midnight hour has come, the last leaf is cut, and the book is closed. Now ask the interested reader what are his or her feelings? Are they in tune for devotion? Does the excited mind, reconning the incidents and

revolving the whole scene, return with satisfaction to communion with its Bible? Is there not an oppressive sense of wrong which scarcely admits of even a hurried prayer? Does not the soul, on the succeeding day, carry somewhat of a depressed air, as if violence had been done to its better feelings, which, like a wound inflicted on the body, must bleed for a season ere they can be healed. Conscience is quick to perceive a wrong, and never fails to administer its retributive reproofs. However earnestly some may plead for the lawfulness of this species of reading, all Christians will allow that they are not the happier for its indulgence. Life's hours are too precious, and its duties too serious and responsible, to allow the one to be consumed and the other to be postponed or set aside for such vanities.

It is not worth our while here to discuss the question, whether in no case these works may be innocently perused. The object of these pages being to promote the joys of piety, and to caution its professors against whatever is likely to impede them, the writer feels himself called upon to state only the general injurious tendency of such productions. He would recommend to the Christian who wishes to avoid every means of deterioration, habitual abstinence from this frivolous species of reading. If we are singular in this respect, it

will be in exact accordance with the divine intention in redeeming us, "that we might be a *peculiar* people."

There is an immense amount of light periodical reading, embracing reviews, the periodical miscellany, the daily and weekly newspaper, which would urge itself upon the Christian's attention, and which is designed to occupy only the interstices of his time But who has not felt the pernicious influence of this ephemeral reading in absorbing not merely the leisure hour, but valuable portions of the day, and invading even the sacred season allotted to devotion? Where this is the case, it must be conceded that they become serious impediments to the fruits of piety, and that no Christian can look for peace and joy from his religion, if he listen to these rival claimants, and permit his mind to be the sport of so many counteracting influences. Our time is too precious to allow of such heavy drafts from these importunate visitors, who, in many cases, have nothing to recommend them but a fine dress and a flippant tongue. A Christian mind cannot give some of them audience without derogating from its dignity, nor converse intimately with them without acquiring an injurious taint from the contact.

The writer would be understood as admitting exceptions; and, far from a general proscription of periodical works, he would recommend a judicious

selection as highly important and useful. But in this case he must urge the importance of giving them their legitimate place as to the interest which they claim, and the time which is employed in perusing them. If there is a fondness for such reading which weakens our attachment to the Bible and to works of practical piety, we have reason to suspect that already their influence has become injurious. If important Christian duties are neglected or post poned to gratify this thirst for news or the mere indulgence of our taste, it is evident we have allowed this reading a place which its comparative insignificance and our Christian obligations will not justify. We thus allow it to rob us of our peace of conscience, the possession of which is indispensable to our pious joy. How admirably does piety adjust these varying claims, giving to man a scale by which he can know how much importance to attach to each, and in what place the several duties and pleasures of life shall fall. If we attempt to reverse this order, or fail to recognize the great principle on which it is founded, to "seek first the kingdom of God," we at once put "darkness for light and light for darkness;" we "fall into temptation and a snare;" our Christian peace is interrupted, and we "pierce ourselves through with many sorrows." Aware of this, the truly devoted and happy Christian determines on a systematic life, in which every

duty shall have precedence according to its importance; time shall be so allotted as to meet and settle the highest claims first, and even the innocent gratifications shall have a place, but not *such* a place as shall disqualify the soul for its great work, or weaken its desires for the pure joys of devotion.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SPIRIT OF CONTROVERSY OPPOSED TO THE EXERCISE OF PIOUS JOY.

THERE is but one more positive obstruction to the joy of salvation which shall claim the consideration of the reader—it is *the spirit of religious contention.*

"Offences must come," and differences of opinion in relation to religious doctrines will exist, and hence we may infer that the collision of opposing sects, and of members of the same sect, with shades of difference, will operate more or less among the armies of Israel. This is owing in part to human infirmity, but much more perhaps to human depravity.

It is not in place here to enter fully into the circumstances which allow, and in some cases even oblige good men to engage in the polemics of religion. None can doubt that such occasions do exist, and that Christians would betray their high trust if they were to suffer in silence divine truth to be impugned and souls to be endangered by its perversion. But with this concession, how evident is it that controversy is entered upon in many cases where neither the amount of difference nor the

causes of provocation are sufficient to justify it All the sad consequences on the peace of Christians, and in prejudicing religion in the eyes of the world, are incurred when the diversity of belief is so unimportant as, by the judgment of both parties, invalidates not the claim of either to true piety. If al such cases were at once withdrawn from the field of conflict, and those left which regard *only* fundamental principles, what a sudden calm would succeed the now agitated and tempestuous scene. How soon would the ark settle down upon its resting-place, the waters abate, and the bow of promise gladden our eyes.

If this spirit of controversy could be confined to the mettlesome leaders in the affray, it would save piety from a vast amount of injury. But when the spirit of strife and contention is made to pervade large sections of the church, and the humble Christian, even in his retirement, is compelled to hear and to respond to the startling notes of the war-trumpet, to buckle on his armor and rush to the conflict, God's Israel becomes like a vast military encampment, where nothing is to be heard but the preparation-notes of battle, or the clangor of resounding arms.

Now, as the deadliest strife among nations often derives its origin from slight causes, so this ecclesiastical warfare is waged many times for the settle-

ment of points where the actual difference is the most difficult point of all to be ascertained. The fierceness of the struggle, however, instead of being, as one would suppose, proportioned to the magnitude of the errors, is often greater as the points of difference diminish. How does piety languish, and how do her joys fade away, before this collision of excited minds; in which, instead of provoking one another to "love and to good works," the main effort appears to be to enlist the greatest number of suffrages to a party, and to wield the mightiest influence. The avenues of Zion, like the open gates of Janus, are ringing with the tramp of combatants, or echoing to the shouts of victory. Party leaders seem resolved that no Christian shall stand neutral in any given strife; and that, be the points at issue more or less important, each one must declare openly *for* or *against* the party. They take their stand on the high places, like Saul at Gibeah, and hewing their sacrifice in pieces, send them abroad over the land, declaring that "so shall it be done unto" the man who rallies not under their standard.

The Christian who is enabled to stand aloof from this warfare is privileged indeed. It is wholly adverse to the growth of piety, and if participated in to any considerable extent, must inevitably rob the soul of its felicity. Who can enumerate the topics of religious strife which in various assemblies and

through various publications are now thrust upon the attention of the church? How many combinations are formed with a view to *coerce* almost the Christian into their ranks. What various conflicting claims are presented among members of the same communion. The excitement which all this produces cannot be friendly to the development of spiritual religion. It cannot promote "the peaceable fruits of righteousness," except on the principle that God may overrule one of the greatest afflictions of our Zion to the furtherance of her joy.

There is nothing in our religion which tends to produce this spirit of contention. It is pacific in its design and in its commands. The soul that has felt its influence is full of love to all mankind. It takes its tone from Him who came "not to destroy men's lives, but to *save* them."

What a variety of beautiful texts might be cited to show how opposite to this contentious spirit is the whole tenor of the gospel. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another." "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another." "Be pitiful, be courteous." "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men." "While one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not

carnal?" "Be perfect, be of one mind, live in peace." "Charity is the bond of perfectness." "Charity suffereth long, and is kind. Charity is not easily provoked, beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the *greatest* of these is *charity*."

In view of the manifest injury to the soul which the spirit of religious controversy inflicts, and with these passages of Scripture before us, how can we expect to retain our Christian peace and joy while mingling in the conflict?

But it may be replied, "Truth must be maintained, and it is necessary that some individuals should consent, even *against* their wish, to stand forth as her champions." This has already been conceded; but with the concession it is still lamentably true that the present times are fearfully rife with causes of contention which, in themselves comparatively unimportant, are magnified to that degree, that the struggle is as heated and violent as if the very ark of God was threatened with annihilation. This spirit is breathed into the church all over the land, and operates like the passage of a tornado to uproot and desolate the verdant beauties of Zion; or, if this figure be too strong, we will call it a kind of malaria which, insinuating itself into every section of the church, causes cold shiverings

and feeble pulses in men who were wont to rejoice in the full vigor of health. Such has been its effect in our land, and piety has greatly declined in her attractiveness, and been deprived of much of her influences, while a scoffing world has felt at liberty to cavil at our faith and to question the sincerity of our professions. Piety has been blamed for that which she has all the while been aiming to destroy, a spirit of unholy contention; and it becomes true Christians to rescue her from these aspersions by exemplifying the charity which she recommends

CHAPTER XXI.

CIRCUMSTANCES FAVORABLE TO THE PROMOTION OF PIOUS JOY.

It will be seen from the foregoing pages, that the charge which is sometimes preferred against religion is wholly without foundation: that if a cloud rest upon a Christian's brow, or any gloom pervade his soul, it is not piety that produces it, but it comes, in most instances, from the obstructions alluded to, which prevent piety from exerting its legitimate influence.

Only such hinderances have been noticed as are prominent in our day, and peculiar somewhat to our age and country. If Christians will avoid these, and give to piety an unobstructed sway over the soul, she will doubtless soon produce those lovely fruits which in the Scriptures are ascribed to her influence. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." For illustration on this point we may advert again to the analogy of nature. When it is intended to cultivate the fruits of the earth, or to call forth the flowers and foliage which are to adorn it, the first important step is to remove the obstructions and place the desired vegetation in

circumstances favorable for its growth. The nature of the soil is carefully attended to. The exposedness of the plant to boisterous winds or nipping frosts is considered. Every precautionary method is considered to prop or to bind it, to lay it open to the sun, or to shield it from a too intense action of his rays. It cannot be reasonably expected that the plant will thrive and put on its lovely dress without all this care and culture. If the soil is overgrown with weeds and obstructed by stones, or if this delicate plant is left to be beaten by the winds or smitten by the sunbeam, how can we look for the natural and proper development of its beauties?

Nor is it otherwise with the fruits of the Spirit The soul that is left exposed to every adverse influence will present a moral condition analogous to that of the neglected plant. Chilling winds will invade it. Blighting frosts will silently wither it, and if it still retain some appearance of life, it will be so stinted in its growth and so barren in its aspect as to excite a melancholy feeling in the beholder. On the other hand, if "God's husbandry" is properly cultivated, and the tender plants are shielded from unfriendly influences—if the culture is in any degree proportioned to the importance and excellency of the expected fruit, there will not be a more attractive sight in the universe than these

"trees of righteousness" flourishing with well-watered roots and unwithering leaves.

If God has given us facilities in the one field, so has he in the other; and if in the one case the reward is proportioned to the care and labor, it is no less certain and generous in the other.

In the productions of the earth we have the rain and the dew, the light and the shade, the heat and the cold, all operating in such due proportion on the soil as to warm into life and call forth into beautiful forms that which is the object of our care. And is it otherwise with the soul whose graces are to be developed under a faithful spiritual culture? Has not God promised, with equal explicitness, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap?" Has he not declared, that "as the rain cometh down from heaven and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall his word be that goeth forth out of his mouth?" As certainly as the dew distils on the flower, and the sunbeam falls upon and enlivens it, so surely will God give his Spirit to refresh, and the light of his countenance to cheer that soul "who diligently seeketh him."

To this established connection between the use of means and the certain production of pious fruits, we must add the very extraordinary facilities for

the full development of the Christian graces which are found in our highly favored land.

If the Christian does not daily advance in his upward path, it will not be for the want of means and appliances. If any obscurity rest upon his soul, it will not be owing to a diminution of light in the moral atmosphere. "The Sun of righteousness has arisen upon us with healing in his wings." There is a flood-tide of salvation poured down upon us. No people on earth are more richly endowed in this respect. The manna falls upon us daily, and in great abundance. The pillar of cloud is before us by day, and the pillar of fire by night. The silver trumpet of the Levites is ringing continually in our ears, and the cleft rock is pouring out at our feet the waters of life. Is there any reason why we should not joyfully march on our way?

To constitute the happy Christian, two departments of labor must be occupied. The one respects the duties which we owe to ourselves, and embraces the exercises of the closet, such as prayer, self-examination, and the study of the Scriptures. These are of primary importance; and it is out of the question to expect pious joy where they are neglected or discharged in a superficial manner.* But scarcely less important, especially in forming the character

* These duties have been recommended and illustrated in a former work—the "Advice to a Young Christian"

of the happy Christian, is the department of labor which respects the good of others, which aims to carry out our influence upon all whom it is possible to reach and to bless. The spirit of the gospel is not evinced nor its joys experienced, without a faithful occupation of our talents and a conformity by self-denying labors to Him "who went about doing good." "To do good unto all men as we have opportunity," is the grand rule; estimating the pressure of the obligation according to the nature of the good and the ability and opportunity to bestow it. Now the Christian who is faithful in the one department, will be very likely to be faithful in the other. He who lives near the private altar, and gathers there his motives and feeds there his zeal, will be ready to embrace every opening to be useful which the providence of God shall disclose. He will not be "standing all the day idle," and crying, with folded hands, "No man hath hired me."

It has pleased Providence to place before his church in our day facilities for doing good, and for extending the cause of truth and righteousness, more numerous and in greater variety than perhaps were ever known before. There is hence no apology for indolence or inactivity. Not one in the spiritual community can say, "There is nothing for *me* to do." The work is graduated to the ability of every saint, not excepting the most indigent.

Each may, if he think proper, select that department of benevolence which is best suited to his circumstances. Such being the case, it is evident that no pious person can be happy if he withhold good from him that needeth, when God has put it in his power to do this good; for, "to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE USEFUL CHRISTIAN HAPPY.

It is not intended to prescribe to the reader the ways or methods which it is his particular duty to adopt, in order to exert a proper Christian influence upon others, but rather to exhibit the necessity of uniting *good works* with devotional habits. This union, we maintain, is indispensable to a full and scriptural development of true piety. Without it, we cannot fulfil the commands of God, nor tread in the footsteps of our Redeemer. "To do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." It is therefore a settled principle, that no Christian can be happy who is not useful; indeed, it would admit of a question, whether any soul can be the subject of renewing grace, who is not in some way engaged in direct acts of benevolence. Yet it must be confessed, that many professors of religion seem to find some apology for inaction in all that respects self-denying efforts to extend the influence of piety.

The facilities for putting forth this influence have been alluded to, and ought to be well considered by all who have enlisted "as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." It is needless to enumerate them, since

they are familiar to all They come to our very doors, and tender themselves to our acceptance. We can do good by our money, by our labor, by our conversation, and by our prayers. We can do good in the family, in the neighborhood, in the church, and throughout the world. Numerous channels are opened in the providence of God, through which we can carry out Christian influence not only over our own land, but to the most distant and degraded spot on earth. Our charities can take wing and light upon the very place where we think them most needed. We may find the objects of our benevolent regard already arranged and classified, so that we have only to select where and upon whom that benevolence shall flow, and the work may commence. With such opportunities of influence, it is clear that none but he who avails himself of some of them, and endeavors to acquire and sustain the character of a faithful servant, can be a happy Christian. God has done all this to invite us to become coworkers with himself in accomplishing the grand designs of his mercy. If we hold back, or if we leave the work to others, while under the influence of some futile apology we seek the things of earth, it is a very dark sign against us, and we may well tremble under the apprehension of being addressed at last as "wicked and slothful servants."

On this subject, however, there is room for many

modifications of personal duty and responsibility. Christians are placed in very different circumstances as to their means of usefulness and their opportunities for doing good. All these circumstances the eye of heaven notices and considers. Some are poor, and their responsibilities are modified by their lowly condition. In them we look for the virtues of industry, frugality, and temperance, but cannot expect them to give their time or their money, except as they consider it a privilege to contribute their mite, which it undoubtedly is even to the poorest. But such can pray, can meekly reprove vice, can let the light of their example—not the less attractive for their poverty—shine upon their ungodly neighbors.

Some are mothers—deeply responsible and highly useful condition—with young immortals cast upon their care, whose moral training no circumstances, save those of dire necessity, should tempt them to neglect. There is no province on earth more important than this. We will excuse the Christian mother, under the pressure of maternal responsibility, from many, if not all the conspicuous charities of the day. If she is, under God, moulding the character of her offspring, in order to qualify them for life's duties and for heaven's eternal joys, we will say to her, "Go on, and God be with you; and although some may stand forth more in the sunlight of observation, while you are laboring in

the shade, the end will prove that your vocation was at least as important as theirs."

The invalid and the aged are exempted, by the providence of God, from some labors, but are under obligation to perform others of which even *their* circumstances may admit. The great and all-important point is to have the *spirit* of doing good—an eye that watches for opportunities, and a hand ready to seize on them as they are unfolded. With this spirit in exercise, no Christian will be at a loss for occasions to let his light shine, nor for subjects on which to expend benevolent action.

We are not opposed to a division of labor, but we do object to the method pursued by some Christians, of selecting a favorite department of benevolence, and aiming to carry it forward under the idea of its paramount claims. Such a course can seldom be pursued without prejudice to some other good cause; and if others who prefer a different department adopt the same course, the whole subject of public charities is placed before the world in a prejudiced light.

A Christian's usefulness is not always in proportion to the space he fills in the public eye, nor to the amount of discursive influence which he may be able to cast abroad over the wide field of exertion Some men may deem it their duty to sow the seed by all waters. With native ardor of tem-

perament, and with a zeal, kindled we trust by a coal from heaven's altar, they may take wing and visit a thousand places, and make their influence felt over a boundless space. The seed which they scatter may in some instances take root, but the real amount of good accomplished in such cases cannot be ascertained. Others may select for themselves a limited spot in the vineyard, and in humble dependence on God, apply their energies to its cultivation. In instances of this description the work is with less *public* observation, but the amount of actual good accomplished may exceed that of the more brilliant and discursive laborer. It has this advantage also, that the fruits are visible; and the moral change, as in the case of a barren spot in nature reclaimed to fertility, is the more gratifying from the recollection of its former disheartening appearance.

Without, then, assigning to a Christian the peculiar field which he shall cultivate, we would simply urge him to be useful in the circumstances in which God has placed him—to shrink from no labor which Providence seems to impose, nor to anticipate happiness except in the diligent discharge of all his duties. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE JOY OF CONTENTMENT.

"GODLINESS with *contentment*," says St. Paul, "is great gain." It would seem from this declaration as if godliness was not *always* accompanied by contentment. There can be no doubt, however, that the design and tendency of true piety is to promote a contented spirit, and where this effect does not take place, we are obliged to suppose something peculiar in the disposition of the individual to thwart its influence.

Instances might be cited where the evidence of piety is not wanting, and yet with such constitutional peculiarities as to hinder its action in a given direction. There is an "easily besetting sin" which piety must combat for a great length of time ere it be brought into habitual subjection. How intimate the connection is between this "besetting sin" and the physical weaknesses of the individual, it is not easy to say; but there is reason to believe that some sins acquire power from this connection. There are also hereditary infirmities, and the secret influence of disease, which operate upon certain minds, and counteract the tendency of religion to soothe and to cheer them.

How diversified are the natural dispositions of men. Some are impetuous and ardent, and others are sluggish in their affections and feelings. Some are restless in whatsoever situation they may be; and others, when once in a particular place or calling, seem never to wish for any change. Now, when piety takes effect on these varying dispositions, it modifies, but does not completely change them. The ardent disposition will evince itself in religion as it did before in earthly pleasures, and the man of a dull, lethargic spirit will be likely to move on with timid pace in the new path which he has begun to travel. The restless temper, ever seeking some change, will find more difficulty in cultivating the grace of contentment, even after embracing a life of piety, than the even-tempered man, whose very nature disinclines him to change.

It is clear also, that we cannot estimate truly the strength of piety from a comparison of individuals on a given point. The two cases alluded to afford an illustration of this. In the one case, contentment would argue a higher degree of piety, because strong constitutional tendencies are to be overcome. In the other, it would furnish less decisive evidence of piety, inasmuch as the constitutional tendencies rather favor than oppose the exercise of this virtue. In this latter case, godliness is as it were superadded to contentment, and there is even under these

circumstances "great gain." The life of such an individual flows on in a noiseless current, and is on the whole tranquil and happy. But in the former example, if to godliness the individual can add contentment, it is a still *greater* gain ; for it is the victory of religious principle over powerful constitutional impediments, and the joys of the triumph are added to the peaceful virtue which has been earned after a hard-fought battle.

If we discover our besetting sin it is one important point gained, and our duty is then plainly before us, by God's grace, to enter the lists against it.

How many Christians are uneasy and restless under the circumstances in which Providence has placed them. If they have godliness, it is manifestly not accompanied as habitually as it ought to be by contentment. It need not be said that pious joy is inseparable from a contented frame of mind ; nor that, where the soul is dissatisfied with its allotment in life, there is envy and even secret murmuring.

On no point, perhaps, are Christians more frequently tempted than on this. They see other men pursuing, with unobstructed and successful career, the wealth and the honors of the world. They look upon their outward estate, and wonder why Providence should have made such a difference ; not remembering that this very difference may be

in their favor, and that while the worldling is receiving his good things in this life, God is preparing something better for the Christian. Even the psalmist was almost ready to call in question the rectitude of the divine government, "when he saw the prosperity of the wicked." But his "envy at the foolish" vanished quickly when he "went into the sanctuary of God." There he "saw their end." He saw the "slippery places" of power and wealth without godliness, and he condemned himself for being "ignorant" on a point so plain.

It has pleased God, for the good of his people and in love to their souls, to appoint most of them a lowly lot in life. He has thus exempted them from "the deceitfulness of riches," and from many of the corroding cares of the world. Full scope is thus given for the development of their piety, and a comparatively unobstructed course is laid open to them to run their Christian race. Shall any complain at this, or sigh to think that God has not hedged up their way to heaven by the conflicts of ambition or the oppressive anxiety which is connected with golden stores? Only let them fully understand their favorable position in life, and they will readily perceive, that if piety is to be the fountain of their felicity, their situation is much the most favorable for realizing its joys. In view of it one is ready to exclaim, in the language of Virgil depicting the

happy state of the humble swain, and which is even more applicable to humble and moderately endowed Christians, "O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona nôrint"—Thrice happy they who appreciate the blessings of their lot. Happy indeed would they be, if they could appreciate the good which God has connected with their state, and learn that divine lesson which Paul had learned, "in whatsoever situation he was, therewith to be content."

The state of mind which we are recommending is not opposed to lawful exertion, put forth in order to better our outward condition. Christianity in no instance paralyzes the springs of activity and honorable enterprise. Nor does contentment imply the duty of remaining in an inferior station when Providence plainly says, "Go up higher." A Christian may make this advance without any discontentment with his former, and perhaps inferior position. If God has appointed to him the humblest occupation or the most obscure post of labor, he is bound to be satisfied, and on the ground that it is God's appointment; but he is not compelled to remain in it when the same sovereign hand opens before him another and a wider field of influence.

Contentment is opposed to restlessness in a given situation, accompanied by so strong a wish for a better as disqualifies the soul in a great measure for the discharge of its present obligations. This rest-

lessness is utterly opposed to true peace of mind. It is a struggle against the manifest will of heaven. No Christian can be happy in the indulgence of such a feeling.

The joy of contentment is a tranquil and happy emotion. It enables the soul to sit undisturbed amid the fluctuations of this changeful scene. It has a smile as bright in the cloudy as in the clear day, and can sing its grateful song as well in a lowly as in a lofty situation. The Christian surely need not deprive himself of this joy. What to him should be the ephemeral distinctions of earth, when he is expecting, after a few revolving suns, to wear a crown brighter than the jewelled toy that rests upon an earthly brow, and to inherit a kingdom richer in its resources than all the kingdoms of the world?

CHAPTER XXIV.

SUBMISSION.

Does piety make her disciples only contented? Is this the extent of her triumphs? Does she not make them submissive and resigned, under the deepest afflictions of life? Her power to counteract the evils of this fallen state, appears most conspicuous amid the darkest scenes which Providence gathers around her path. Then does she come to illustrate that promise which, in view of every possible gradation of mortal suffering, declares, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

There are but few Christians who live for any length of time without some trials; so few, indeed, as only to form rare exceptions to that general inheritance of tribulation which our Lord decreed should be the portion of his followers. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." These afflictions are various in kind and in degree. In particular cases they are wholly of a spiritual kind, and have reference to the inward conflicts of the soul. Sometimes this species of suffering is the most intense and insupportable which can be conceived. But more generally they have reference to the peculiar outward state, temporal or social, in which God

places his children, with a view to the cultivation of the passive virtues, such as gentleness, patience, and submission. Poverty and persecution, disappointed earthly expectations, alienated friendship, sickness and bereavement, are among the principal burdens which are laid upon the soul and body to serve as the occasion of eliciting the lovely grace of submission. The Christian's perfection, that is, the *completeness* of his character, cannot be attained without this suffering in some form, nor without its effect in the development of patience and submission. How else could he "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ?" Where else, or under what other circumstances could he know the "fellowship of Christ's sufferings?" Nature shrinks from the ordeal. The fiery furnace is intimidating, and we dread to enter it, even though we have the assurance that we shall come forth unharmed, yea, even like gold purified and brightened by the process. But an invisible hand will arrange all these circumstances of trial, and introduce us to them in such a way as to give them their happiest effect upon the soul. God will adjust the burden to the back, and give the staff of his promise, and enable us to hold on our way even over a dark and rugged path.

Let us contemplate the sufferer. *There* is a man who has labored hard and long to acquire the means

of temporal support, but one adverse blast after another has swept away his property, until he begins to look around upon his loved ones with actual solicitude. Another glance at life's moving panorama shows us the lone widow, with her orphans at her knee, looking up into her anxious and sorrow-shrouded face to ask why that tear is there. *Here* is one nailed to the sick couch, and week after week inquiring for some slight indication of a favorable change. The physician's eye speaks no encouragement. A mother is bending over the short-breathing child, and kissing its burning brow. It is her earthly all. A husband stands petrified over the cold remains of her whom he loved from youth. O death, thou hast dipped thine arrows in the deadliest venom! Yonder sits one leaning mournfully forward and brooding over violated vows. Alas, credulous heart, those vows were but the impulse of passion, whose flame was kindled at no pure altar. The domestic circle, that promised elysium, is not always the heaven that was anticipated. The friends who in sunshine wore such complacent smiles, can pass on with averted eye, now that life wears a dreary aspect. How diversified and deep are the afflictions which meet us in our passage through this vale of tears!

But there is one thing, and one *only*, which can make the soul the better for them. It is *true piety;*

and where this is in exercise, they become, under God, the secret agents of ripening the sufferer for the skies When the soul submits to the dispensation with true Christian resignation, it can be even "joyful in tribulation." By this we mean, that the consolations may so preponderate as to give a decided prominence to the peaceful and happy feelings over that anguish which nature must ever feel when the stream of her earthly pleasures is interrupted. Hence, we often find the good man sitting calm amidst circumstances calculated to work up a tempest in the bosom. He has his eye not simply on the affliction, but on the hand that has caused it, and he experiences along with the wound the healing balm which faith applies.

See, then, the advantage which piety gives in a world like ours, where almost every avenue we tread leads to some grievous disappointment or deep affliction. When the shaft strikes the man of the world, what has he wherewith to medicate the rankling wound? While exempt from personal suffering, and while his sources of happiness are left open to him, he can wear as cheerful a countenance as the Christian. But invade the paradise of his joys; cut down his loved ones, and let the elements consume his earthly substance; bid messenger after messenger, as in the case of Job, fly to inform him of successive disasters, and at length

touch his own body, and "make its beauty to consume away like a moth"—where is his joy now? What staff has he now to lean upon? No mingling resignation is there to calm his troubled breast, and no heart-felt submission to the divine will in view of God's righteous dealings. The mind must pore upon the dark picture, unrelieved by even a ray from the opening heavens.

Now the Christian is authorized, and even commanded to "rejoice in the Lord always;" to "glory in tribulations; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart."

On what a slender foundation rests the worldling's joy! It is like the plant which springs from the stony ground; it seems for a season to shoot forth with rank luxuriance, but it has no depth of soil; its roots are insufficient to support it. While all is calm it may cast forth its shoots, and even put on some appearances of beauty. But when the storm rises and mingling elements are invading it, how fares it then? "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found."

How permanent is the basis of a Christian's joy! Its roots are strongly imbedded like the cedar of

Lebanon; no wind that blows can battle it down. The very tempest that beats upon it only adds to its stability, and rivets it more firmly to its foundation. This joy grows not on earth, nor depends for its aliment on the smiles which earth can bestow. It is planted in heaven, and is watered by that stream which makes glad the city of God. How then can it wither? How can the failing sources of this world endanger the extinction of that which blooms on the eternal hills? Why need the Christian despond, even when all else is gone? Why may he not smile amid the wreck of his earthly hopes, when he can look up and claim God as his portion, and heaven as his eternal home?

CHAPTER XXV.

JOY IN DEATH.

Christian submission extends to all the dark and trying dispensations of the present state. It includes even the stroke of death. It says with the last expiring breath, "Thy will be done." The triumph is the greater, because the approach of the destroyer is distinctly contemplated, and the consequences of death both to the prepared and unprepared are vividly before the mind.

The faith of the Christian invests the hour of dissolution with a solemnity which respects not merely all that is to be left behind, nor all that is repulsive in the cold aspect of death, but what is to be experienced when the soul is disengaged from the body and goes to heaven's tribunal. The retributions of eternity are full in view. The dying saint as fully believes in a hell to which the wicked will be driven, as he believes in a heaven to which the righteous will be welcomed. He has no more doubt that he who believeth *not* will be damned, than he has that he who *believeth* will be saved. His views on this great doctrine of eternal retributions are clear and distinct, and he approaches the crisis under their full influence. He has also the conviction, stronger now then ever be-

fore, that no native traits of amiableness nor self-originated virtues can afford him the least hope of acceptance before God. He sees, in the retrospect, that these supposed virtues are deficient in motive, and they vanish before the accumulated sins which have attended him at every step of his mortal journey. What then gives him peace in death, or how can he expect to triumph in that fearful hour? "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory *through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" What gives poignancy to death's arrow is sin, and what makes this sin so potent to destroy is the violated law; but in the case of the believer, "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," and this same Saviour "is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Leaning, then, wholly on the "arm of his Beloved," the Christian may come to this fearful point without terror, or even apprehension. "Who shall separate him from the love of God?" Shall "death?" "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" Here we have the strong foundation on which the dying saint reposes. It is not in "works of righteousness which *he* has done," but solely in the "righteousness of Christ imputed to him, and

received by faith alone." This is the rock on which he rests as the dark flood rises around him. When the body is a wreck, and is falling away under the successive strokes of death's billows, to this rock of salvation does the soul cling, until the command is given that moors it safe on Canaan's happy shores.

Many do not contemplate death at all until they are forced into the narrow pass, and then all is wild amazement or downright insensibility. The hopes of recovery occupy the mind until, by the action of the disease, it is so far incapacitated for reflection as to entertain no distinct notions of death or of its consequences. In such cases, a willingness to die may be mistaken for Christian resignation, and the stupidity which precedes death is misnamed submission.

But piety does more than make the soul *willing* to go, it often begets an intense longing "to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." Every thing that relates to the closing scene is well adapted to give the impression of its power to sustain and to comfort the soul. "Come," said Addison to a young nobleman, "and see how a Christian can die." And says Dr. Young,

> "The chamber where the good man meets his fate
> Is privileged beyond the common walk
> Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of heaven!
> His comforters he comforts; great in ruin,
> With unreluctant grandeur, *gives*, not *yields*,
> His soul sublime."

"Sweet *peace*, and heavenly *hope*, and humble *joy*,
Divinely beam on his exalted soul,
Destruction gild, and crown him for the skies,
With incommunicable lustre bright."

The triumph of piety in the last hour is more evident in the positive desire to go, than in the mere *willingness* to die. As Dr. Young has beautifully expressed it, the Christian "*gives*, not *yields*, his soul sublime." When a mere worldling is brought to the bed of death, there may be a constitutional hardihood which sustains the mind in some degree of equanimity, or there may be in the action of the disorder such intense bodily sufferings as to extort the wish that God would put an end to them even by death. But is there any triumph here, or is there in this case any desire to depart founded on the bright visions of faith? No; alas, all is forced submission, and the wish to die is grounded simply on the insupportable suffering which is laid upon the body.

How different are the Christian's emotions in death. There is something of positive good beyond the grave which engages his thoughts and awakens the desire to be gone. It is a view of the new Jerusalem, the soul's happy home, that kindles in the dying eye that almost supernatural light, and infuses into the spirit such a sublime composure, as it adjusts itself for its glorious flight. Who but the

Christian has ever been found longing to depart? Others may submit to this necessity, but *he* rejoices in the hour of liberation. Others may be willing to die, because they have nothing to live for, or because they prefer death, regardless of its awful consequences, to anguish so insupportable; but the Christian's views are of a sublimer cast. He has the air of a conqueror. He often meets the last enemy with alacrity, and says, with lips almost cold in death, "Thanks be unto God, which giveth me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Whatever disadvantages religion may be supposed to have in health or in seasons of worldly prosperity, her claims must be admitted when the health is broken and that world of vanities is receding on the dying eye. But if her blessings are set at naught in health, and when their adoption in view of rival claims would prove the soul's decided preference and its well-founded hope, if *then* they are despised and worldly pleasure is pursued, there is little probability she will hear the dying sinner's cry, and place under his sinking soul her eternal arms. "If ye would die the death, live ye the life of the righteous." You cannot travel in a different road and reach the same glorious end.

But some may say, that while this triumphant death is occasionally witnessed, there are many exceptions, and that Christians do not always pass the

dark valley with such exulting songs. It is true, that God does not give his chosen ones a uniform or an equal joy in death. Indeed, sometimes they are hurried away without a moment's warning. There are instances in which, from the influence of disease or some constitutional timidity, there will seem to gather around the soul dark shadows to obscure its vision. Nor can we anticipate the precise emotions of the pious soul until they are experienced. The life is the great criterion. But seldom, however, do we see a Christian die without some sweet intimations of his future felicity. If faith is not triumphant, it is sufficiently strong to give peace. If there are no enrapturing foretastes of heaven, there is a good hope through grace of its fruition.

When Bunyan's pilgrims are passing the river of death, and have reached the midway current, Christian is represented as sinking, and Hopeful as bearing him triumphantly along; but soon they both reach the opposite shore, and are welcomed by the celestial messengers. The great allegorist intended by this, no doubt, to represent the inequality of joy and triumph which Christians experience in the hour of death; but the end with all is the same. The dark waters may intimidate, but cannot overwhelm the soul. There may be some misgivings, but never can faith be disappointed, nor Christian

hope sink in despair. All will be well at last. The bright shores of heaven will be reached in safety, and the soul, conducted by "shining ones," shall enter the gates of the new Jerusalem, and forget all its sorrows in the enjoyment of its everlasting rest

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONCLUSION.

Is not the reader prepared now to say, "Let me both live the life and die the death of the righteous?" Is it not evident, that if in a Christian's death there is something to be coveted, there is also in his life that which claims our imitation?

We have aimed to rescue piety from the charge of making her votaries gloomy. We have endeavored to exhibit her influence where it is allowed an unobstructed sway, as producing in the soul a "joy that is unspeakable." The impediments to this joy, especially such as exist in our day and country, have been dwelt upon principally with the design of cautioning Christians against them; and some circumstances favorable to the development of pious joy have also been noticed, in order that they may be fully appreciated and improved.

As the mind glances back over the whole ground, what is the practical impression? What benefit, dear reader, is to accrue to thy soul from these considerations? Shall the book be closed without one holy resolution or one renewed struggle for the kingdom of heaven? Shall it be like a vision of the night that is gone when the eye opens upon

earthly scenes, and that, whether joyous or sad, is viewed only as a dream? Do you expect, after its perusal, to go forth into the world with the same unguarded heart, or without breathing up to God one additional prayer for his protection? Is this little volume to plant not one fragrant flower in your future path, nor brighten your spiritual horizon with one beaming star? Then indeed has it, as it respects any good to *you*, been written and read in vain. But we will hope "better things of you, and things that accompany salvation."

Are you a professor of religion, one by whom the sacred name of Christ has been named? Then may we hope that the perusal of these pages will have strengthened what is good in the soul, and will lead you to unremitted efforts under God for still greater attainments. You must be convinced that piety will not make you happy in life, nor triumphant in death, if you allow her not her legitimate influence. She will not suffer the market-men and money-changers to sit with her in the temple. She must be the sole divinity, or she will not preside at all. God and mammon can never occupy the same heart. Settle it in your mind that all compromise for worldly gain or pleasure is the death of pious joy. *That* amaranthine flower grows only on Zion's hill, and he who plucks it must toil up the steep ascent, and leave the dull earth far behind him.

If you have been led astray, now is the time to retrace your steps. As the sigh of recollected but departed joys heaves your bosom, seize the favored moment to plead with God that these "joys of salvation" may be restored.

It is time that Christians evinced more of the attractive features of their religion. Its power to make them happy is but seldom adequately tested. We have to appeal too often to the fears only of the impenitent. We ought to wear so heavenly an aspect as to convince them of our superior happiness, and to compel them to admit, that in the comparison their grovelling pleasures are empty and unsatisfying. How can we expect them to concede to the beauty—I had almost said to the *reality*—of our religion, if its loveliest fruits are not exhibited? Are we willing that souls should be repelled from the path of life because we have obstructed its entrance, and withered every fragrant plant that grew around its gateway? Shall that which was given us to attract men to heaven, prove the perverted instrument of driving them down to hell? Shall our lamp go out, or burn so dimly as scarce to direct our *own* steps, while for the want of its light thousands are "stumbling on the dark mountains?" Christian reader, ask and answer these questions to your own soul.

Or is my reader not only not a *professor* of relig

ion, but one the convictions of whose conscience assure him that he is not a *possessor* of true piety? Allow me to ask, if the perusal of these pages has not convinced you of at least one practical error: I mean the very common impression that piety robs us of joy and felicity? Perhaps *you* have not fallen into this error. It may be that some very favorable specimens of living piety have come under your observation, and convinced you that true and substantial joy cannot be experienced apart from religion. Is this your conviction? Why then do you remain where you are? Why attempt to fill yourself with husks, when "in your Father's house there is bread enough and to spare?"

But if you have stood off at a distance from religion, and taken your impressions of its influence from some merely nominal professors, or from some who, though truly pious, were afflicted with a constitutional melancholy, it is to be hoped that you will not any more charge upon religion what belongs to some accidental circumstance in connection with it, or what belongs to our remaining depravity or what ought in some instances to be charged to downright hypocrisy. You must have seen that the Christian, with all his admitted failings, is the only happy man. His religion, where it is not obstructed, pours sunshine into his soul; it makes life's joys doubly precious, and life's burdens easy

to be borne. And in death, who has the advantage then? Whose dying pillow is softest? Whose dying eye is brightest? Whose prospects for eternity are the most alluring?

Take what view you will of this subject, behold the Christian when and where you will, it must be admitted that to him belongs the only foundation of true and substantial joy. With this concession, let me ask you, what are your own expectations of happiness? Are you hoping to find it in the indulgence of the animal desires? Do the pleasures of sense put in a successful claim? Ah, how often has the cup been mixed! Perhaps as it touched the lip a momentary pleasure flashed through the veins, but the soul exclaimed, "This is not happiness."

You have tried social bliss. Under the excitement of kindred minds you have seemed to enjoy the scene; but solitude has come, and in that solitude there was a voice that still spoke of misery.

You have been impelled by the thirst of gain; your success has been all that you anticipated. Or you have "loved the praise of men," and have obtained it. But as the fancied reward came into your hand, has not the unsatisfied soul still asked, "Is *this* all?"

Every path which you have trod has failed to conduct you to the long-desired rest. Why is this?

Because you have refused the only hand that can conduct you to that rest. You have expected to find happiness in indulgence, whereas it is to be found in self-denial. You have looked for it in the pleasures of the world, when it is to be obtained by overcoming the world. You have shrunk from the cross of Jesus, when that very cross leads him who bears it to heaven's unending joys. The lowly spirit you have not sought; the tear of penitence you have not shed; the love of Jesus you have not felt; the hope of heaven has not dawned on your benighted soul, nor the Spirit of God breathed his peaceful influence there. How then *can* you be happy? "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." If you would be at peace, you must go where alone it can be found; and "forsaking all to obtain all," you must adopt the spirit of the Christian poet:

> "Now I renounce my carnal hope,
> My fond desires recall;
> I give my *mortal* interest up,
> And make my GOD my ALL."

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